THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOUL

By

FR. JOHN-EVANGELIST

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CAPUCHIN CLASSICS : I.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOUL

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THE BENEDICTINE NUNS OF STANBROOK

With an Introduction by

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOUL

By
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of Bois-le-duc (Balduke)

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The Sufferings of Christ
BY MATTIA DA SALÒ

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INTRODUCTION

Amongst the strangely forgotten things of history are the works of the Capuchin master-minds of the seventeenth century. So forgotten were they that until the last four or five years it was commonly assumed that though the Capuchin family of the Franciscan Order had given to the world indefatigable missionaries and not a few powerful preachers, it had produced little or no literature of lasting value. L'Abbé Henri Brèmond, in his monumental work: *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* (Vol. I), announced his discovery of Yves de Paris, and hailed him as the ideal embodiment of the Christian Humanist spirit of the seventeenth century. In 1927 Père Ubald d'Alençon published, in *Etudes Franciscaines*, an admirable cursory introduction to the writings of the seventeenth-century French Capuchins. Thus attention was called to a forgotten chapter in the history of Catholic literature in France. But the Capuchin writers of the seventeenth century were not confined to France. Italy, Germany and the Netherlands produced Capuchin writers of outstanding merit and marked originality of thought. This is not the place to discuss the causes of the oblivion into which these writers and their works

speedily fell after a period of undeniable popularity and widely felt influence. The Capuchin master-writers shared the fate of the creative Catholic Humanist movement of which Saint Francis de Sales remained almost the sole living representative until recent years.

In the series of "Capuchin Classics" we propose to reclaim for English readers some small part of the literary field covered by Capuchin writers from the close of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth. The works published in this series will be representative of Capuchin thought during this period.

It will be found that whilst the Capuchin masters were imbued with the traditional Franciscan spirit and teaching, they gave it a new expression under the influence of the Catholic Humanist spirit of the period: in that lies their distinctive merit.

. . .

John Evangelist of Balduke (as his seventeenth-century English translator names him), whose master-work heads the list of "Capuchin Classics," belongs to the Netherland school of Capuchin mystics. In the world he was named Gerard van Scharm, and was born at Bois-le-Duc (S'Hertogenbosch) about 1588 or 1589. In 1611 the Capuchins made a settlement in Bois-le-Duc; and, attracted by the austerity of their life, Gerard two years later sought admission into their order. On the completion of his noviciate

he made his solemn profession, on 18th October, 1614. Six years later he was appointed master of the novices in the friary at Louvain. He held this responsible charge for six years. In the meantime, in 1623, he was elected definitor of the Province of Belgium, and appointed guardian of tne Louvain friary. At the provincial chapter of 1627 he was appointed to the friary of Tervueren, near Brussels, where the cleric-students, immediately after their profession, were sent to be specially trained in the interior life of prayer. It is probable that John Evangelist had the spiritual charge of the students. In 1630 he was elected guardian of this friary; in 1633 he was transferred to the friary of Louvain, and appointed guardian and master of novices. He died at Louvain on 2nd November, 1635:[1]

John Evangelist wrote several works on the spiritual life. Those of undoubted authenticity are:

1. *Het eenwigh leven* (The Life Eternal) which went through many editions not only in the original Flemish, but in French and Latin translations. The Flemish text was re-edited by P. Paschase van Meerveld-hausen, and published at Utrecht in 1915, under the title: *Emmanuel.*

[1] These details of the life of John Evangelist are supplied by Pere Hildebrand, the archivist of the Belgian Province, in his Introduction to the new edition of the original Flemish text of the present volume, entitled *Het Ryk Gods in U*, edited by P. Paschase van Meerveld-hausen (Bruges, 1921).

2. *Diviso animæ de spiritu* which was several times republished in Latin and in a Flemish translation.
3. But his great work was *Het Rych Gods binnen u lieden* translated by Dom Salvin into English under the title: *The Kingdom of God in the Soul*, and now republished in a slightly modernised form by the nuns of Stanbrook. It is probable that this work was written when Joannes Evangelista was first appointed master of novices at Louvain in 1620. A manuscript copy was sold in Ghent in 1625 for one hundred and fifty francs. But the work was not put into print until 1637, two years after the author's death. In the course of fifty years it went through five editions in Flemish. A German translation published in 1665 also achieved several editions. Of Dom Salvin's English version here given there is no need for me to speak. I will but express my gratitude to the nuns of Stanbrook for undertaking the labour of re-editing this version, of which they have long treasured an almost unique, if not unique, copy.

Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.F.C.

FOREWORD

THE small treatise which, slightly abridged and modernised, is here given to the public belongs to a period which may fairly claim to have been a golden age of mystical theology. The bare mention of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century at once recalls S. Teresa, S. John of the Cross, S. Francis of Sales, but in the glory which surrounds those giants of their day we are apt to forget a number of less widely known figures who have left works which well repay attentive reading. The comparatively recent Capuchin Franciscan reform produced not only preachers second to none of their time, heroic missionaries and martyrs of charity, but highly skilled theologians, especially in the realm of that mystic piety which was so important a factor in the spiritual renovation of Western Europe during the days of the Counter Reformation.

The present work appeared in 1639, having been preceded in 1608 by the *Regula Perfectionis* of Benet Canfield, the English Capuchin who played so valuable a part in the Catholic reform movement in France; and in 1617 by the *Secrets Sentiers*[1] of

[1] Translated into English under the title, *The Secret Paths of Divine Love* (Orchard Books).

his Flemish brother in religion, Fr. Constantine Barbançon. Beyond a certain similarity in terms, Fr. John Evangelist's book does not seem to have been influenced by that of Barbançon, but there is a definite likeness to Canfield's work, although no reference is made to either. More noticeable is the affinity with Tauler and Ruysbroeck, and although, again, neither is actually cited, in the margin of the seventeenth century copy of the work before the writer, a contemporary hand has written references to Tauler, although these are inaccurate.

If contemporary references be lacking, however, such is not the case with early authorities; quotations abound from both Greek and Latin Fathers, whilst considerable use is made of the works of S. Bernard and of the author's great brother in religion, S. Bonaventure. Beyond the name of his authority, Fr. John Evangelist gives no information; frequently he seems to paraphrase rather than to translate, whilst he italicises not only the original but his own gloss. Since he also occasionally combines different extracts into one, considerable difficulty is found in tracing some of his references.

The style of the English version is that of the period, with its long, involved sentences and eccentric punctuation, whilst there is considerable verbatim repetition, some of which has been omitted as tending rather to confusion than elucidation.

Whilst not without points of likeness to contemporary works the present treatise has some

distinctive characteristics. In structure it is thoroughly *Dionysian*, following the *via negativa* common to most mediæval and early modern mystics, yet it differs in substance from the earlier Flemish mystics as from the other Capuchin works. Revolutionary as it may be, it may be questioned whether it be not possible to draw another line of demarcation than the usual one of *Dionysian* or *pre-Dionysian*, and to classify mystical writers according to the place given in their works to the Incarnation. A marked feature of mediæval piety was an intense realisation of the Incarnation and all which flowed therefrom, and an equally intense and tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ, before which, as has been well said, the allegory and symbolism of an earlier day was doomed.[1] For the most deeply spiritual thinkers the pure Dionysian mysticism remained but framework, whilst it provided them with a technical terminology in an age which required that its theology should be systematised. But there was something lacking; pseudo-Dionysius savoured of Plato rather than of S. Paul, hence though, believing him to be S. Paul's disciple, mystical theologians considered themselves bound to follow him more or less closely, in practice they improved upon him. Dionysian mysticism was *clothed upon*; its exclusive *Spiritus est Deus* was complemented by *Et Verbum caro factum est*, and the result was a systematised mystical theology for which pseudo-Dionysius had done what Aristotle did in another department,

[1] See "Western Mysticism" (*Pax*, March, 1923).

but which went far beyond his neo-Platonic conceptions. Representative of this development are S. Bonaventure, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Suso, S. John of the Cross (despite the scholastic training of Salamanca which renders him more highly technical) and most of the Capuchin mystics. Their true forerunner and master is the un-Dionysian S. Bernard, and with him they can exclaim: *This is my supreme philosophy; to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*[1]

This tone is less marked in Fr. John Evangelist. With the exception of a difficult, and somewhat obscure, chapter dealing with the place of the Passion in contemplative prayer, no use is made of the Incarnation, and our Lord is explicitly mentioned not half a dozen times. There is no reference to the Blessed Sacrament, though there are two passing allusions to Confession. Unlike Canfield, who agrees with S. Teresa that not even at the highest stage of the mystical life may the sacred humanity and the Passion be abandoned;[2] and Barbançon, who teaches that only at this stage can the soul meditate perfectly upon these mysteries, Fr. John Evangelist reminds us that *the Apostles were to be deprived of the most excellent and grateful humanity of Christ before they could receive the Holy Ghost.*[3] He seems to fear lest the imagination may run riot and perhaps, like Tauler, wished to guard against a wrong devotion to the sacred humanity

[1] Ser. in Cant. xliii. 4. [2] Reg. Perf. par. III. c. vi. [3] c. xiv.

leading to illusions and sentimentalism.[1] Evidently, as his closing words suggest, he means us to assume more than he says explicitly.

Spiritual writers can be rightly understood and fairly judged only in the light of the period in which they wrote. In the early ages of the Church mystical theology was not treated as a distinct branch of the subject. We gather the mind of the Fathers thereon from their great works in theology generally; men were content to follow the cycle of the Liturgy and to use the treasures left to the Church in the Sacraments and in Holy Writ. Mental prayer was taken as a matter of course: *Let him simply enter in and pray*,[2] says the Patriarch of monks. Nourished by holy reading, almost unbroken silence, above all by the Divine Office, in its turn it reacted upon the latter, infusing life and love into what routine might have caused in time to become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. The early Benedictine, Carthusian or Cistercian contemplative knew no other method, and was left to pursue his way in perfect liberty of spirit. As prayer came to be treated as a separate study, with the advantages came the drawbacks. Exaggerations crept in, now in one direction, now in another; counter teaching came as a corrective and, when necessary, ecclesiastical condemnation. This will explain the stressing now of one aspect, now of another, and help us to understand warnings and

[1] Second Sermon for 4th Sun. after Easter.

[2] Rule of S. Ben. c. lii (of the Oratory of the Monastery).

criticisms which, to the modern mind, sometimes seem a tilting at windmills.

Two features alone would suffice to mark the present work as unusual. The author says at once that he is not writing for beginners *I mean not this of an unmortified man and beginner who, although by his essence he be near to God, nevertheless is far from him according to his affection and all his powers. Consequently that belief in God's presence awakens him not to love and seek God purely in all things. To such an one I intend not to speak, for he must use imaginary and forcible reasons to draw his will with violence from all creatures and to convert it to God.*[1] The souls with whom Fr. John Evangelist is concerned are beginners in the *mystic* way, but not in the *ascetic*. He assumes that they have no attachment to sin, are no strangers to ordinary mortification, have a good will and desire union with God. Such souls are not merely pious but fervent and prepared to spend themselves; they are the dwellers in the fourth mansion of S. Teresa's Interior Castle.

Again, he is original in rejecting that stage of suffering known variously as the *Night of the Spirit*, the *Great Privation*, the *Great Desolation*. Barbançon has been accused of glossing over the night of the *senses* but he treated of the later stage ably and at length. His brother Capuchin allows the earlier *night*, but any later desolation he considers is the soul's own fault, and merely the result of giving way to some subtle form of self-love. *This exercise*

[1] c. vi.

simply consists in having nothing, being nothing, and desiring nothing, but to be perfectly resigned to the Will of God: desiring or choosing nothing else but to be entirely what God pleases. He that is nothing, has nothing, nor desires nothing, can lose nothing: nor can anything be taken away from him whereby he may be accounted arid or desolate.[1]

The thesis of the book is first stated. Man's whole end and object in life is union with God who dwells in the soul as in His loved sanctuary; union not with one far off but in whom we live and move and have our being. Since the Fall the human will has been so warped and weakened, and the understanding so dulled, that man no longer realises that to dwell in God is to dwell in his native element; hence the spiritual life must be largely a process of simplification until the soul has regained the unity and purity proper to it.

To secure this four dispositions are essential, and to these four *points* Fr. John Evangelist returns repeatedly, as to his *Delenda est Carthago*. They are (1) perfect abnegation of all things created and, above all, of Self; (2) perfect resignation to the Will of God; (3) pure love; and (4) naked faith. He is as practical and as all-embracing in his requirements as is S. John of the Cross, though that doctor goes into more minute detail. Detachment from creatures is but the necessary preliminary to the detachment from Self which is so much harder to secure; and when memory, understanding and will have been

[1] c. xxvii.

brought into a holy captivity there opens out a third field for labour. The soul must seek and rest in God and not in His gifts; it must love and live by God detached from all that is not God. Thus it becomes resigned, not as a Stoic or a fatalist, but in a state of holy, selfless indifference, content with whatever God may give or deny. The love of the soul for God becomes free from every kind of self-seeking—*pure love*; and the soul clings to God in a strong spirit of faith—the *naked faith* which is independent of sensible devotion or consolation and which, because it believes in a dawn, can walk undismayed in darkness.

Once the soul is thus denuded and given to God He can do anything with it. It is freed from the complexity or *multiplicity* which has hitherto clogged it and retarded its progress and, having regained its true simplicity, is capable of union with God who is absolutely simple. Not that any pantheistic absorption in God is ever contemplated but a union by means of love and *sine medio*—without intermediary—in the summit of the soul which has now annihilated Self and attained its *nothing*. This constantly recurring expression reads awkwardly in English, but to find a satisfactory synonym is not easy: *nothingness* expresses the thought only occasionally. It is at once an emptying of Self and a peaceful, loving recognition of the *nothingness*; it is the *néant*, with which we are familiar in French and which a saintly modern contemplative has called *a divine truth divinely understood*.[1]

[1] *Une Ame Bénédictine* (Dom Pie de Hemptinne), Aspirations et Pensées lxix.

His four *points* sufficiently attained, the author passes almost at once to treat of *Quiet Prayer* and passive contemplation. The instruction upon active contemplation is slight and not detailed. Inevitably, as the compass to the pole or the flower to the sun, the soul, now resolute, fervent and partially purified, turns to God with a *natural loving inclination*, and this disposition, together with its perfect detachment, it must carefully preserve. This would seem to be the stage of Affective Prayer, and the soul has now done all it can; it is for God to raise it above itself. The reader is warned that much of what follows will seem folly and incomprehensible, and it is evident that Fr. John Evangelist often speaks from experience, and that obscurely. But so does every mystic; no words can express the inexpressible, and one and all must echo *Nec lingua valet dicere nec littera exprimere*. The soul's attitude is one of quiet but intense yearning after and waiting upon God, without anxiety or *operative* activity; but we are told emphatically that *quiet prayer* does not mean false rest or idleness. The author is repeatedly careful to repudiate the erroneous teaching later to be labelled Quietism, and to proclaim his whole-hearted, loyal obedience to the Church. *Emptiness is not God but the proper place for God.*[1] Time will be needed for the soul to become thus simplified, *since nature frames images so subtle that they can scarcely be recognised as images.* Then it will be aware of a special grace which is here called the *divine influx*; *divine inaction*; *divine mercy* but

[1] c. vi.

usually, as with other mystics, the *divine light*. It is the *light of wisdom* of S. Thomas;[1] *the light of divine grace superior to what we experience in the active life* of Ruysbroeck;[2] the grace of contemplative prayer, at once enlightening the intellect and moving the will, which is to do on earth what the *lumen gloriae* will do in heaven. Here comes in the only reference to the Night of the Senses, and we may notice that the Capuchin mystic places it further on in the mystical life than do most masters. At this stage there will be suffering caused by fallen human nature; rebellion, disgust, loneliness and anxiety lest the soul be not doing enough. The remedy is *naked faith*: the soul must be *resigned in its irresignation*—a phrase worthy of Teresa of Lisieux!

In a later chapter he returns to the problem of suffering, when explaining how the soul is to deal with acute mental or physical pain which threatens to make prayer impossible. Here, for the only time, he makes use of the Passion, in the light of which the soul must contemplate and bear the trial. Seemingly, he is speaking from experience but the language is involved and difficult; the clearest explanation seems to be that he is contemplating the Passion of our Lord as mystically re-enacted in the soul, in much the same way as does Canfield. Where opinions would differ, however, is with respect to the instruction to keep alive the mental pain by recalling details

[1] De Verit. quaest. xviii. 1.

[2] *L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles*, l. ii (ed. des Bénédictins de Wisques).

which may bring it back in its poignancy. To many it will seem that such a course leads to over-preoccupation with self, whilst refusing to use the dispensation of divine mercy by which Time, the great healer, gradually dims and soothes most suffering. The conclusion of the chapter is excellent though somewhat contradictory: there must be no self-will, even in suffering, and the soul must not desire the pain to be greater or less, but accept it simply as it comes.

The practical good sense, distinctive of the teaching of the Capuchins, is very evident at this point. Although the faithful soul is far advanced in the spiritual course (it is in the fifth mansion of S. Teresa; the state of relative perfection) it must never presume upon its own strength or consider itself dispensed from steady effort and vigilance. It must generously combat the smallest failings, realising that for one who has received such grace they are serious. So it goes on until the union is complete. It is not clear whether the author intends us to imply the consummation known in mystical theology as the Spiritual Marriage, but the soul which has reached the standard to which he points is ready for such union. There is nothing between it and God; it enjoys God *sine medio* and has mysterious but unmistakable perception of the divine presence. The supreme experience is short, as all mystics agree, but it recurs more and more frequently as the soul grows in generosity.

One obscure point calls for notice. In several places Fr. John Evangelist speaks of attaining to the divine *Essence*, a form of speech which has brought

more than one mystical work within measurable reach of the Index. Eckhart, Tauler and Ruysbroeck were all suspect at one period; even Suso did not escape; some expressions in the third part of Canfield's book caused the work to be prohibited. But both the earlier and later ages were troublous; revolutionary theories were being broached in theology as in politics, and very little was needed to brand an author as heterodox. In the present treatise the word *Essence* is sometimes used synonymously with *presence* but, in any case, mystical theologians had attached a meaning to it different from the strictly philosophical definition of the schools. Probably under Platonic influence, S. Augustine seems to suggest that some intensely intimate revelation of God might be granted to favoured souls—that momentarily they might *see that which is*. S. Gregory denies the possibility, although he interprets the words *man shall not see me and live*[1] in a purely figurative sense, i.e. no man shall see God who is not dead to all created things and to himself,[2] which is also the interpretation of Fr. John Evangelist. S. Bernard and S. John of the Cross teach explicitly that the divine essence can never be seen in this life and, of course, S. Thomas is clear and emphatic as to the

[1] Exod. xxxiii. 20.

[2] Moral. xviii. 88, 89. The question has been raised as to whether S. Gregory's words referring to S. Benedict *Animae videnti Creatorem*, etc., were meant to be taken literally, but in view of that doctor's teaching elsewhere there seems no ground for so doing.

impossibility, save possibly in the exceptional cases of Moses and S. Paul;[1] though a present-day Dominican theologian has raised the question as to whether the Doctor Angelic himself may not have been another exception.[2]

Allowing, however, for the different hypotheses, Fr. John Evangelist's use of the word *Essence* seems akin rather to the special sense in which we find it in the earlier Flemish mystics. *In the essential being of the soul there is no action, for the faculties with which it works flow out of this very essence. In this alone abides that silence, that perfect quiet, that proper condition for God to operate the divine generation and speak His Eternal Word. In this depth of its being the soul is, by its very nature, incapable of receiving anything but*

[1] De Verit. quaest. xviii. 1. Summa II. 2, clxxv, a 3 and 4; clxxx, a 5.

[2] See *S. Thomas d'Aquin. La Vocation, l'œuvre, la vie spirituelle*, by L. H. Petitot, O.P. (Revue des Jeunes, Paris). After the mysterious ecstasy whilst saying Mass on December 6th, 1273, Thomas was described as *mira mutatione commotus* and *obstupefactus*. He refused to continue the *Summa*, declaring that such things had been revealed to him that all he had ever written seemed but straw. Within three months to the day he was dead, the physical collapse seeming so unaccountable that fantastic rumours spread that he had been poisoned. Père Petitot suggests: "Was the old child's question—What is God?—answered by a grace of contemplation absolutely exceptional, and, we may say, unique? Some saints have died of love, Thomas died of ecstasy; some have died of longing for God, Thomas died of having seen Him."

Père Joret, O.P., in his *Contemplation Mystique*, considers this experience to have been the highest union possible on earth, but falling short of an actual intuition of God.

God's own essence and that without any intermediary. God enters here Himself alone, Himself wholly and not partially and God enters into the soul's very essence.[1] Or to take another exposition: *By essence is understood the ideal existence or image which we possess in the mind of God from all eternity, according to which we may be said to be one with our eternal image ; the work of the supernatural life is to realise, as far as possible, the ideal of God in us.*[2] The language is often involved but the conclusion is the same: God remains God and the creature a creature, but through love the creature is *deiform* ; *all in God, all for God and all God, and nothing in itself, nothing to itself, nothing itself.*[3]

Only at this stage does the author now give some practical instruction regarding external work. Having laid a firm foundation of prayer and supernatural life, he turns to outward activity and applies a simple test, Is the particular work good in itself, and is it necessary; that is, is it imposed by obedience, the duties of one's state of life or the good of souls? If so, it may be done without scruple, and the worker must not merely *shuffle over* it, on the pretext of recollection or piety, but must aim at making the work naturally good. *It must be done with that fidelity as she* (the soul) *imagines God would have her to do . . . it must be faithfully performed according*

[1] Tauler: Sermon for Sunday after Christmas.

[2] *L'Orthodoxie de Ruysbroeck. Œuvres* T. I (ed. des Bénédictins de Wisques).

[3] Canfield. *Reg. Perf.* T. iii. c. v.

to reason, and as her conscience shall dictate. If mere routine work the soul can still continue its commune with God; if it be complicated then it must behold God in it and supernaturalise it.

Throughout the book runs the cheerful optimism of the Franciscan. Though the author never minimises the difficulties, he is never discouraging. He is ever urging the truth that God longs for the soul as it can never long for Him; that the difficulties are of its making, not His; that of all obstacles the greatest is anxiety, discouragement or faint-heartedness; that the one essential is a good will to which God will supply what is lacking. And the reward will be exceeding great: *The soul will realise in truth that to deny herself and all creatures for God is truly to seek Him, and to lose all is truly to find Him. She experiences what a good exchange she has made, for whatever she has denied and forsaken for God she has more truly obtained and infinitely more besides; for God Himself has become hers.*

THE KINGDOME OF GOD IN THE SOVLE, or, VVITHIN YOV.

Luk 17. 21.

DISCOVERED, AND DEmonſtrated by cleare reaſons, common ſimilitudes, and certayne ſignes, teachinge the God-ſeekinge ſoule how ſhee ſhall find the ſame after a Spirituall Death within Her, and conſtantly poſſeſſe, and enioy itt: accordinge to the words of Chriſt. *The kingdome of God is within you.*

COMPOSED BY THE R^d FAther Fa. Iohn Evangeliſt of Balduke Guardian, and Maiſter of the Novices in Lonvayne, and Diffinitor of the Cappucyns in this dutch Province.

Printed at Antwerpe by HENRY ARTSENS in the Cammer ſtreet at the white Lilly 1639.
With Grace, and Priuiledge.
And now printed in English at Paris by LEWIS DE LA FOSSE in the Carmes ſtreet at the ſigne of the lookinge Glaſſe 1657.
With Approbation.

THE PREFACE TO THE FIRST TRANSLATION

BY

DOM PETER SALVIN, O.S.B.

CHRIST, our Lord and Saviour, teaches us to pray daily *Thy kingdom come.* Although these words have been variously expounded by the Fathers, yet many of these, with S. Ambrose and S. Augustine,[1] interpret them of the Kingdom of Grace, whereby God governs and reigns in the souls of the faithful. This kingdom, for which we daily pray, is shown unto us in this book. Of this kingdom Christ said *The kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who seeketh after precious pearls.*[2] *By which pearl,* says S. Gregory, *is understood the sweetness of a celestial life.*[3] S. Chrysostom also says that the mysteries of truth are pearls;[4] for like as pearls enclosed in shells are

[1] S. Amb. Expos. in Psal. cxviii. P.L. xv. col. 1432, 1433 et seq. Expos. in Luc. lvii, P.L. xv, col. 1811. S. Aug. Serm. lvi, et seq., P.L. xxxviii, col. 379. (This teaching is met frequently in the works of both Fathers.)

[2] Matt. xiii. 45.

[3] S. Greg. Hom. xi. in Evan., l. 1. in Matt. xiii. P.L. lxxvi. col. 1115.

[4] S. Chrys. Hom. xlvii in Matt. Migne T. viii. col. 483.

in the depth of the sea, so are the divine mysteries in the light of the senses. Thus it appears that the kingdom whereof this book treats is a pearl hidden under the deep senses of the Holy Scripture and the doctrine of holy Fathers, as also in the very depth of our souls. But who shall dive into the bottom of the sea to find this pearl and show it to us; who shall expound unto us the divine mysteries hidden in Holy Scripture and the Fathers? *Whom shall he teach knowledge*, says the prophet, *and whom shall he make to understand the things heard? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are plucked away from the breasts.*[1] Just so was the author of this book perfectly weaned from the milk of earthly things and withdrawn from inordinate affections. Despising all worldly delights, and renouncing all earthly and transitory things, even from the beginning of his conversion, he took upon him the religious habit in the Capuchin Order. This he did with such devotion and fervent zeal that, at the very instant, he felt himself changed into another man, and, through a singular divine grace, placed in the exercise written in this *kingdom of God*. This he embraced with all diligence and fidelity, and followed out with extraordinary recollection and austerity of life. He scarcely took two hours' rest in the night and those sitting uneasily, and for many years was most sparing in his meat and drink, using no other food than herbs out of the garden and water to drink; this he continued as long as his nature was able to endure it. Through such

[1] Isai. xxviii, 9.

practice, and that of the other most excellent virtues of poverty, obedience, chastity, humility and patience, he deserved to be admitted into this kingdom, and to receive the singular gift of divine contemplation, and to live therein without ceasing. Thereby he enjoyed the hundredfold reward of the divine presence who had renounced all for our Lord's sake, and this was clearly seen in his outward behaviour and lovable bearing, making him beloved by all whose hearts he wonderfully stirred up to devotion by his words and virtues. But the better to preserve these gifts and graces, and to follow Him who *leadeth to solitude and there speaketh to the heart*,[1] he gave himself much to abstraction and to seeking out solitary places, and to this end lived most willingly in the solitary convent of Capuchins in the wood of Sorie, which was built chiefly through his influence. There, withdrawing his eyes and powers from all earthly things, he lived a heavenly life upon earth, and found out profound mysteries and secrets of the divine wisdom, which he afterwards most abundantly communicated to others, both by words and by writings; teaching how a loving soul must seek the supreme Good and keep it in all places, alone and in company, in solitude and in conversation, in the church or in the market. For uniting herself with her Spouse the soul shall have her understanding free from all images, and her will united with the will of God in a holy detachment from all created things, and shall embrace God in the naked depth of her spirit where this precious

[1] Osee, ii. 14.

treasure lies hidden. This is now shown in this book by our reverend father, who teaches not merely from the opinions of others and from books, but from his own experience, gained from singular mortification and abnegation and an exceeding great observation of, and compliance with, the divine grace to the very end of his life. *For*, says S. Augustine, *the price of this pearl is we ourselves; who to possess the same are not free unless we renounce all that we temporally possess for our freedom.*[1] And for selling and parting with such things we receive no greater reward than ourselves, which we have given up; for whilst we are entangled in such impediments we are not ourselves. Hence it follows that we must give ourselves so entirely that we retain neither any image nor any affection to any created thing; whether it be friends, goods, pleasures or whatsoever else it be, we must give it all to purchase this kingdom and pearl. The disposition necessary for this is clearly described in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and following chapters; but before you come to purchase this pearl, read the aforesaid chapters, not once but often, and consider whether you are able to pay the price. For until it be paid to the last mite, and so long as there is anything wanting on your part, do not think that you can bargain with Almighty God; but when you have the full price, whosoever you are, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, without any more ado this precious pearl, the kingdom of God, will be given you. A set price is put upon it, as upon a penny loaf;

[1] S. Aug. Quaest. in Matt.; col. 1372, P.L. T. xxxv.

neither more nor less is given for it; if you think this price too great then this kingdom is not for you. The holy man Job says that *Man does not know* its *price*,[1] and it is most certain that it must cost flesh and blood, yea (as a certain author says) the very marrow of the bones. Yet young and unmortified persons, full of flesh and blood, who have no virtue, who have never practised austerity in fasting or watching, will—as we are wont to say—with hose and shoes enter this kingdom. But they know not the price thereof, for such purity is required that no greater is in the power of man, and, as the author of this book used to say, we must take example not from men but from angels. Not only must a man do well, but he must do his best and uttermost, so that (as again our author was wont to say) were such an one to die instantly he would not do otherwise than he is accustomed to do continually and ordinarily, saving only that which God and Holy Church commanded him at such a time.

From what is said some may think that very few attain thereunto since few have this preparation; it is very true, and I wish to God men would be made to believe the same. O God! what pity is it to see so many make profession of this divine and spiritual life, yea, even persuade themselves that they love God in the highest degree and are perfectly mortified; and yet all is but pure nature, for they are full of self-love and complacency, rigid in their censure of others and prefer themselves before others. Children,

[1] Job xxviii, 13.

children, look well before you; you may deceive yourselves and men but not God. This pearl is hung up in public view for all men, but of hundreds, even thousands, scarcely one obtains it even of those who will be counted spiritual. So few are they that the author used to say that he would not have believed it had he not found it out by experience. The reason is that men will not give the price of this kingdom. Wherefore, devout souls, do not deceive yourselves through an interior quietness which is but a false idleness and rest of nature, for this is a stone at which many stumble. They will not read or pray vocally, or meditate, but take their leave of all exercises and in a passive manner unite themselves to God. But these omit the one and spoil the other, and open the way to the enemy and to a thousand fancies and tricks of the imagination. They rest only in nature and, little by little, the passions begin to revive, so that such men become self-conceited, full of their own judgments, and unwilling to believe learned teachers who would bring them out of their error and into the right way. The reason is that they lack the preparation necessary in order to be endued with the divine light and to be united to God after so high a manner.

It may also happen that one thinking to keep himself thus quiet and passive, thereby to prepare himself for the grace of God without any working or co-operation, may fall into heresy condemned by the Council of Trent. If any man say that man's free will, moved and stirred up by God, does not co-operate with God, etc., whereby it may dispose itself to obtain

the grace of justification, etc., but as a thing without life he do nothing but hold himself merely passive, let him be accursed. Whoever shall say (be he who he may) that in a contemplative life the spirit must be wholly passive without any work, is contrary to this author and much deceived, neither has he one jot of this exercise. It is true that, after long mortification, the operative activity must be restrained and moderated to give place to the work of God in a greater quietness of spirit; but it must be so done that leaving the one we obtain the other, and how one is to behave himself in this quiet is taught in the sixteenth chapter of this book.

After all that has been said, some may ask: If so few attain to this exercise; if so great purity be required thereunto, to what end is this book printed and set forth? We answer that if all cannot buy this whole kingdom at least they may secure some part of it. And although this may seem directly against the opinion of this our author, and of other spiritual writers, who clearly teach that we must have all of this exercise or nothing and that it cannot be obtained piecemeal: yet I will not infer that all which a devout soul does is lost labour if she do not at length attain to this practice. For I believe that the nearer she approaches thereunto the more perfect she is, and the more perfectly will she enjoy this kingdom of God in the next life. So, albeit few reach the perfection declared in this book, the labour does much avail the soul and such souls may, in the meantime, marvel at the immense goodness of God, his friendship

and familiarity towards his faithful, loving servants even in this mortal life. By this book they will learn to praise and magnify God Who has given such gifts to men, and may hope to be made partakers thereof. They may rejoice and thank God that there are such men upon earth, whom Thaulerus calls the pillars of Christianity and the Holy Church,[1] for one such is able to prevail more with God Almighty than a thousand others. S. Ambrose used to weep for the death of any good priest because the people had lost a pattern of good life; and we have just reason to lament when any such person departs this life, saying as Pope Gregory said when S. Bonaventure died, that there was a pillar of Holy Church fallen.

This book will serve also for our humiliation, seeing that such things may be obtained and that we are so far from them through our own fault and immortification. So said holy Job: *He shall look upon men and say I have sinned*;[2] upon which words S. Gregory says: *Like a poor man beholding the treasures of a rich man does more clearly see his poverty and esteems the less of himself; in like manner a soul beholding the wounderful lives and examples of the saints becomes more humble.*[3] Considering, therefore, the great purity of these great friends of God with good reason may we be ashamed in the presence of God and, striking our breasts, say that we have sinned.

[1] Tauler: Serm. for Feast of S. Andrew and 3rd Serm. for Epiph.

[2] Job xxxiii, 27.

[3] S. Greg. Mor. xxiii. 15. P.L. lxxvi, cols. 294, 295.

When his disciples asked S. Anthony on his return from visiting S. Paul the Hermit why he had stayed so long, he answered with abundance of tears: "Oh miserable sinner and wretch that I am, who am but the shadow of a true monk and do unjustly glory in the name of a religious man! I have seen an Elias, a John Baptist in the desert when I saw Paul." Another, having seen the perfection of some religious, cried without ceasing: "I have but the bare name of religious."

We were created and called to this perfection; some are particularly dedicated to God and make profession of a perfect and spiritual life, or at least we are Christians. We see this purity of love, this so great perfection, and in the meantime we are so far from it. Think you not that we have good cause to lament and be ashamed and to say: "Woe be unto us! we have seen angelic and seraphic men upon earth; we deserve not the name of religious and spiritual persons or of true Christians."

Moreover this book must needs be most profitable since it teaches all which all spiritual writers aim at in their books of meditations and other spiritual exercises. For all meditations of the Passion, of Death, of Judgment help to make men die to evil desires, to exercise themselves in all virtue and to enkindle in them the love of God; but in this book is what many writers omit or express imperfectly. For as some books teach us the exercise of Martha, others of Mary, this joins both, teaching us how we may become both Martha and Mary together;

that is how we may do all external works and yet remain actually united in spirit with God, so that we are never deprived of this divine light so long as our own disposition be not defective. But this is a high strain indeed as our author used to say; for he esteemed it a most heroic act to speak, eat, drink and work externally in this divine light without in any way hindering the actual union with God. He added further that, after a man had discovered this divine light in himself through interior prayer, it is yet very needful for him to continue therein with all possible diligence for many years before he become a master in this exercise.

Lastly, it was necessary to put this exercise in print because, whereas the author had written it only for the use of some devout persons, it was (contrary to his meaning) copied out, whereby many errors crept in. For the correction of these it was thought necessary to publish this book to the Honour of God.

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOUL

Chapter the First

Of the great Ignorance of men in searching for their happy and blissful End, which is God.

There is no ignorance so unseemly or hurtful as for a man to do a thing and not to know the end for which he does it. For it is the first thing he ought to know, and for want of such knowledge he can do nothing that is fitting or profitable but by chance. Therefore, if any undertake a trade or office he first endeavours to learn what is required for the due performance of the same, and it is still more unseemly not to know the end for which he is, and for which he is created and lives. For thither ought the works and efforts of all men to be directed, like the arrow of the archer to the white or mark. All creatures, from the least to the greatest, as well reasonable as unreasonable, know the end of their living and being, their proper place to which they belong; thither do they always tend and incline themselves in whatever quarter of the world

they may be, exactly performing that for which nature ordained them. The sun, moon and planets know their motions and keep their fixed order; the sea keeps its tides, the rivers flow according to fixed laws; and it is so firmly imprinted upon each one by nature that they never fail to fulfil the end of their creation.

Man only is ignorant of the end for which he is, and why he has received this present life and is placed in this world, whereas, he, of all creatures, should be aware of it, seeing that he has the use of reason. By reason of this ignorance the world has ever been, and is still, full of errors and disorders. If, from some high tower, we could behold the occupations of most men in the world, and had likewise before our eyes the end for which each and all were created, we should not be able sufficiently to wonder at the blindness of the children of Adam. Though we should see the fishes leap out of the water to fly in the air as the birds, and on the contrary birds cast themselves into the water to swim and live there as fishes, it would not seem more strange or wonderful to us than to see men work so contrary to the end for which they were created by God.

A certain philosopher, who though himself in darkness, had yet more natural light than others, once considered the blindness of men, and he went about at noon with a lighted lantern to seek *men* among men; the prophet David says: *God hath looked down upon the children of men to see if there*

were any one who had understanding or did seek God: They are all declined, they are all together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, there is not so much as one.[1] According to this saying it would seem as though even God would not believe this thing until he considered it, and numbered men one by one. And although we, who have now the true faith, do know in some sort the end for which we were created and whither we must tend in this world, yet we are very ignorant of the true way and of the means to attain thereto; and even if we know, we have so little desire thereunto that our knowledge is of small avail. Hence even yet an enlightened man might well walk through the world to seek out men who have obtained their true end or who are tending thereto as they ought. To this end the prophet Jeremy bears witness, saying *I have looked round about and have found nobody.*[2]

Daily, enough books appear teaching us that the end and perfection of man's life consists in union with God, but very few teach us wherein this union consists, or how we can attain to it, and if any such there be they seem too obscure, too high, and too difficult. Hence we think them full of error, we belittle them, and we reject them. This is the truth, and it is more deserving of lamentation than anything in the world, the more especially as we see this blindness among religious and spiritual persons, whose state and vocation demands that they shall discern and seek to obtain this end.

[1] Ps. xiii, 2, 3. [2] Jer. iv, 25.

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And if there be any who set themselves to seek union with God they reckon themselves to be united to Him before they are well approached to Him. This is a sign that they are really still far from God, for if we see that a thing is near to another, or even touching it, we do not think that the two are united. For if a thing is to be united with another it must lose all dissimilitude, all its distinct properties, and assume the likeness of that with which it is to be united. Hence we do not say that iron is united with the fire so long as we see it as iron; to be perfectly united it must be so glowing that it seems to be one with the fire. We do not consider that the air is united with the sunbeams so long as we can perceive anything else in it than light and clearness. So we ought not to assume that our soul is united with God unless, with all its powers, it is wholly turned away from creatures and from itself, as though neither existed, and so perfectly converted to God that it lives in His sacred presence, knowing, tasting and feeling nothing but God alone.

Truly if we saw a fish near to the water yet making no movement to leap into it, or a stone hanging suspended in the air and not falling downwards, we should assume the fish to be dead and the stone to be in reality no stone at all. What shall we say now of that man who does not tend towards his first and true end? Let us hear what the prophet David says of such an one: *Man being in honour did not understand: he is compared to brute beasts and is made like unto them.*[1]

[1] Ps. xlviii, 13, 21.

I have been led to add this small treatise to the divers other books which treat of the perfection of this life, in the hope that, to myself as well as to others, I might suggest some means for attaining that blessed end for which we are all created, to which we ought all to tend. For it we have received our body and soul in this present time, while we await that *day* wherein we must give account of how much or how little we have approached that end which is God, and be rewarded or punished in like measure.

Wherefore I have written this present treatise and called it *The Kingdom of God in the Soul*, according as our Saviour Christ teaches in the Gospel: *The kingdom of God doth not come with observation; for behold the kingdom of God is within you.*[1] This kingdom the soul obtains when she has subjected the inferior man to the superior, and the superior man to God, who then lives and reigns in her as in His kingdom. In this sense S. Cyril, S. Jerome and S. Augustine understood the words of the *Pater Noster: Thy kingdom come.*[2]

Who would not be a king? Who would not go to the end of the world, over the sea and mountains, if by so doing he might find entrance into the kingdom of Heaven? How, therefore, shall anybody neglect the teaching we here give in order to show

[1] Luke xvii, 20, 21.

[2] S. Cy. Hier. Cat. xxiii, Mystag. P.G. xxxiii col. 1118 & 1119. S. Hier. Comm. in Matt. l ii c. 12. P.L. xxvi, col. 83. S. Aug. Sermo lvi et seq. P.L. xxxviii col. 379 et seq.

him that that kingdom is in himself? Truly, if a man who was used with great labour to fetch water from afar were shown the fountain within his own house, would he not spare the labour of fetching it from a distance and enjoy what he had within his own doors? Where the kingdom of God is there is God, who is the fountain of all good, beauty and perfection. Man seeks these without himself with great labour, yet by the kingdom of God we understand nothing else but a perfect union of the soul with God. Hence, knowing that the kingdom of God is within her, each soul should be on fire with the desire of seeking it.

Moreover, where is the kingdom of God there is no sin, vice, bad affection or desire; no trouble, changeableness or instability; no aridity or vexation. Instead, man must be detached from all created affections whereof God is not the cause; all human frailties must die, and in their place he must have all virtue and perfection, yea an angelic purity, in perfect rest and peace in God which cannot be disturbed by suffering, pain, or affliction.

Such union of the soul with God is man's utmost perfection and for it he was placed in this world. And although, because of his frailty, he is not able to attain to a constant and perfect rest in God so long as he is in this life (which is but the way to the next) yet there is a certain union with God possible to the soul in this life. In this union man finds a repose in God which does sufficiently satisfy him in this life, and this union must be such that it comes as near as

possible to that of eternal blessedness. In this world the principal means of this union is *faith*; hereafter it is in perfect charity as a full reward of this life.

Therefore we shall show how the soul may find God and keep Him in all places, works, pains and troubles. We shall speak in simple words and without subtleties, desiring rather to instruct the simple and humble of heart than the witty and self-conceited; imitating Christ who thanks His Father *for that he had hidden it from the wise and prudent and revealed it to little ones.*[1]

First we shall speak of the great ignorance in seeking after the kingdom of God and how they stray from the right way which leads thither: then we shall show how they must behave themselves to find it: and afterwards we shall set down what is required in the soul in order that it may become the kingdom of God. We shall show therein how the soul must suffer itself to be led by God, persevering constantly in all aridity, bodily sufferings, and afflictions, and lastly in all exterior distractions and employments.

[1] Luke x, 21.

Chapter the Second

How greatly men do err in seeking God, and therefore do not Find or Know the Kingdom of God within them.

It is much to be wondered at that man, who was created to the likeness of God, and whose last end is God, should seek after Him so little, and so quietly rest out of Him; and no less wonderful is it that among those who seek God so few find Him. For every day we see many souls who fail to reach perfect knowledge of God and union with Him, who yet have courageously left the world and all occasions of sin and apply themselves wholly to seek God.

Some break their heads before they have well begun, and stop in the beginning of their course. Others think it enough to be in the way, and remain clinging to subtle images or some sensible feeling of God, being yet very far from the truth. Others intend to proceed further but fall into strange fantasies and opinions, which they do not understand, and think they have obtained their true end whereas they are merely deluded with high-sounding and obscure words. Such either do not consider or do not know what mortification and purity of life

is required for perfect union with God, hence their lives are more according to the senses than to the spirit, and they expose both themselves and spiritual doctrine to the contempt of others. Others, again, there are who try to come to God following the good counsel and instructions of their directors, and they obey these faithfully yet without much constancy or progress. To-day they think they so possess God as never to lose Him; to-morrow they find themselves so estranged from God that they think they will never more attain to Him. So they spend many years, as it were, groping blindfold after God; what they have does not satisfy them, and they know not how to reach that to which they feel interiorly called. Among these some of the most faithful remain all their lives disquieting themselves after their Beloved; the greater number, however, turn again to creatures and leave off their search.

So, as we have said, it is very rare to find any who seek God in truth and find in Him that rest for which they were created. It is not because God is so hard to be found, but because we seek Him so crudely, and with so little understanding. If God were to be found after such a manner of seeking Him as men commonly use, it would be necessary either that He should draw them all to Himself by violence or miracle, or that He should change His divine essence.

S. Bernard says that in seeking God we must proceed as we would in seeking any other thing which we would gladly obtain. We must observe the time when, the place where, and the manner in

which it must be sought and enjoyed.[1] When hunters seek to catch a beast or a fowl they observe diligently the time and place in which the game is most commonly to be found. Moreover, they have their several ways and means of catching their quarry; some game they take with nets, some with dogs, others they shoot, and if they fail in their observation it is no marvel if they catch nothing but lose their time and labour and expose themselves to the laughter of others. For example, if a man were to look for herons in the midst of the cornfield in the heat of summer, and hunt them with dogs as they do the hare, doubtless he might justly be accounted imprudent for not better observing the time, manner and place for catching that fowl. In the same manner, in seeking God we must observe the time, place and manner in which God is to be found. And whereas earthly things may be found sometimes out of their places this is not so with God, who is ever the selfsame changeless Being. Therefore, though He may be sought in different ways in the beginning, all these must end in one way, which is also simple and unchangeable, and is as different from those ways by which we seek created things as God's condition and nature are different from the condition and nature of creatures. Many

[1] Either S. Bern. Serm. in Cant. lxxv, P.L. clxxxiii, col. 1145 et seq. or more accurately Serm. I in Cant. Sal. P.L. clxxxiv, col. 13. This sermon, formerly ascribed to S. Bernard, is the work of Gilbert of Holland (Hoylandia) Abbot of Swineshead, in England, and a disciple of Bernard.

ways there are by which men seek God which show little or no consideration of the essence and nature of God, but are ordered as though he were sensible and corporal as other things. This is manifest from the daily exercises of those who are seeking God, such as meditations, aspirations, forced and active conversion to God. By these means they would gladly find God and unite themselves with Him, but many do not use them as the first means and the beginning of the way to God—for which they are convenient and necessary—but treat them as the final end. But God is rather kept from us by reason of our imaginary workings and set processes; His place is only in peace, and He is not to be found but in a pure abstraction from all created things. Therefore, when He would speak to His bride He says: *I will lead her into the desert*,[1] and the prophet David says: *Lo I have gone far, flying away: and abode in the wilderness*.[2] For of themselves our powers are unable to apprehend, taste and enjoy God, who is driven away from us, not only when we would grope after Him with our imaginary forms or feelings but also when, after an imaginary manner, we cast our understanding upon Him. Hence He says in the Canticles: *Turn away thine eyes from me for they have made me flee away*.[3]

Not only do men fail in their manner of seeking God, but also in the place and time of seeking. For they seek God without, whom they have within, and who is nearer to them than they are to themselves;

[1] Osee ii, 14. [2] Ps. liv, 8. [3] Cant. vi, 4.

which is as unreasonable as if a man were to seek in foreign countries, with great labour, for the clothes which he has on his back. Such as these err because they seek God in the church or in the place of their prayer, and when they depart thence they let go what they had obtained, because they will not take the pains to retain it. For God is in all places present alike, and ought also alike in all places to be sought after and held.

Some, again, seek God carefully in the time of devotion, when they find themselves interiorly moved towards Him, but in time of interior desolation they leave off seeking, and betake themselves to creatures. Others there are who, after they have sought God for some time, pour themselves wholly out upon some recreation or sensible pleasure, which occasion offers to them, and lose at once all they had obtained.

There are souls who sometimes manfully resist their sensuality in order to find God, but afterwards it seems hard to die to their senses continually and so, from inconstancy, they let go all they had gained. Then they begin again, and, like to a man who, having to roll a stone to the top of a hill, through laziness or negligence lets it fall down again when he had already reached the middle, so they, from sloth and want of a little more diligence, spend their whole lives in a continual labour without rest.

Such men proceed with God much as children whom we sometimes see imitating the Church service. They erect an altar and have some image of Jesus, or other picture, which they deck now after one

manner, now after another. Sometimes they carry it very solemnly with singing and noise, soon, however, it is thrown behind some chest, where it lies for days. Their manner of divine service has no rule or order, but their childish fancy. So do many souls with God. With the use of images and figures of the divinity or the humanity of Christ they frame to themselves a God according to their own fancy, and proceed to seek themselves in God. When they have any sensible feeling of God they are very diligent and prudent, and take great pleasure in their exercises, making many resolutions and fair considerations and images which they adorn and ascribe to God. But when the wind changes, and this sensible devotion departs, all their joy and piety depart also, though perhaps they may trail on their way with weariness and tedium until some new attraction presents itself.

Such deserve not to be called seekers of God; perhaps they keep from grave sin, but they seek and find only themselves. Consequently the kingdom of God within them is unknown, neither do they ever behold the face of the King.

Chapter the Third

How others err in this search, though less grossly, and fail to find the Kingdom of God.

But it is matter for wonder and lamentation that there are many other devout souls who seem to seek God aright, but yet do not really find the Kingdom of God within them. They think that they practise self-abnegation, that they cling to God in pure love and naked faith, that, at all times and in all places, they are detached from creatures and from themselves and converted directly to God. It is out of compassion for these souls of good will, who do incomparably more for God than the former class, that I have put in writing these spiritual instructions in order to show them where they err, and lead them into the right way to God.

The defects of these souls are harder to be discerned than are those of the former sort, for they are interior and hidden, and in many things these souls proceed rightly. The chief defect of many of them is that they do not expect any let or hindrance on their way; they believe that they have surmounted all difficulties and found God, and that there is nothing more left for them to do.

Consequently they remain always in their defects and go no farther; indeed they seek no farther. Yet those who, by thought and practice, have learned what is required for union with God, easily perceive by the life and conversation of such persons that they are deceived and are not where they imagine and ought to be.

It is greatly to be wished that some such enlightened man would show them their error, and point out their defects, for otherwise we can tell them scarcely anything which they have not often read in spiritual books. They persuade themselves that they have reached that union of which such books treat, and have passed through all the difficulties and experiences there described. To help such I know of nothing better than to lay before them at length the words of S. Bonaventure wherein he describes the perfection of the soul in this life. *"This is the highest perfection of man in this life, so to live in God that the whole soul with all her powers and forces united in God, becomes one spirit with him. Also that she think of nothing but God, feel nothing but God, understand nothing but God; all the affections of the soul being united in exultation of God, and only reposing sweetly in the enjoying of her Creator. For the image of God in the soul consists in the three powers, to wit: understanding, memory and will, and so long as they are not wholly imprinted in God the soul cannot be said to be deiform. For the form of the soul is God, and she must be imprinted in him as wax in the seal. And this never happens perfectly but when the understanding*

is perfectly enlightened in the knowledge of God, who is the supreme Truth; the will perfectly moved to love the supreme Goodness; and the memory perfectly absorbed in beholding, enjoying, and holding the supreme Beatitude. For in the perfect possession of these three consists that beatific glory which shall be finished in the next life. Hence it appears that the perfect beginning thereof is perfection in this life. And a little further on he says: *The perfection of prayer is that the soul attain that to which she tends by praying, that is that she be wholly alienated from inferior things and united only to the divine, not knowing anything, nor able to feel anything but God. There does the soul truly rest; there she perfects herself in the clearness of light, the greatness of the divine blessedness, and the security of peace.*[1]

The holy doctor rightly calls this kind of union the highest perfection of the soul in this life. For the soul in this state is wholly separated from all multiplicity and conflicting activities, and, according to her capacity, rests in God, lovingly, sweetly, and without violence or labour. For truly if this union of the soul with God were but with one power or part of the soul, and were obtained with violence and labour and only occasionally, the soul could not rest therein or be contented with it. Therefore, the soul which wishes for perfection must consider whether she is united with God according to the manner we have described. For if she be united only partially, and has difficulty in maintaining this union, she has

[1] S. Bon. De Profectu. Relig. l. ii; c. lxxiii. T. xii ed. Peltier).

not yet found the right way by which to attain to true perfection.

Therefore, let those souls of whom we have already spoken take notice of this, and not think that they are united to God because they find in themselves some detachment and inward peace; whereas much is often still wanting in them. For though such interior dispositions be very good in general as being means to greater perfection, in these souls such are not good, for they mistake the means for the end and rest therein, thinking that they know the right manner of union.

Let them reflect upon the words in which S. Bonaventure describes the height of perfection, and also let them consider the foundation thereof. For he who considers only the heights of perfection, union, rest, detachment, and does not reflect upon the groundwork of these may easily persuade himself that he is perfect when, in truth, he is far from perfection. Of these grounds of perfection we shall treat in particular, desiring such souls to read with humble attention and then honestly judge whether they have them or no.

The daily lives and works of souls are the surest witness to truth. Now the soul which has reached union with God must be wholly divine in her works, words and omissions, so that it may be perceived that she is interiorly so united to Him. Not only must she be free from every kind of evil to the utmost of her power, and be prepared for all virtue and goodness, but she must always do the best and

most perfect of which she is capable, and that purely for God without any thought of self-interest. She must never be content to do the good when she can do the better and more perfect. This supposes in her the annihilation of self and union with God.

Now many spiritual men speak well concerning perfection and union with God, but their lives and conversation show several imperfections which are not compatible with this union. They lose time in unprofitable words or works, and make little account of it, or when they have to do good and necessary things they apply their whole nature and senses thereto. This alone is sufficient to prove to an enlightened soul that, even in times of solitude and prayer, such persons have not the true presence of God.

Some souls there are who seek God in images and many operations of their own, and are wholly ignorant that He whom they seek is above their nature, in Spirit, without image, in quietness and solitude. These souls are like men who, in the midst of the land, seek with much toil what they should seek beyond the sea, yet they do not know how to reach the sea or even that it must be crossed.

Others there are who, knowing that they must pass over the sea, have already left the land, but then do not know how to sail. They know that God is to be sought in a simplicity without the use of images, and they apply themselves thereto, but yet they make little progress, although some make more than others. Some imagine that they are exercising

themselves in naked faith and true abnegation, yet for all that they are full of their own will and rest in subtle images and forms. There are others who exercise themselves in faith and have left many external things for God, so that they have attained to some detachment from creatures and interior rest and peace, and are able now and then to turn in upon themselves. They resemble a man who is indeed at sea and upon a ship, but his ship is moored fast to the land, and so remains still in the same place, although such a man may imagine that he is sailing forward.

Others there are who forsake all exterior things but retain themselves, seeking their own comfort, interest and ease in God. These experience more constant introversion, and, therefore, think that they have found God, or are going straight to Him. But they are like one whose ship has indeed departed from the land but has run aground unknown to him.

Yet others know full well that they are full of themselves, and that they must deny themselves in order to come to God, so they endeavour to do so by their own works. But these are like the man who perceives that his ship is aground, yet tries to float her again by hauling at a rope fastened to the mast, and so labours in vain.

Others think that since they are free from external things, and from themselves also, they need do nothing more, but that they need only remain thus in order to be more and more united to God. But these are

like men who, once in the ship, neither put up a mast nor hoist a sail, but trust that the current will carry them into the haven. In the meantime their vessel merely drifts hither and thither. These last souls deceive many, for they may well be very near to finding God; yet they are not really in the right way; either they are not sufficiently detached from all creatures and from themselves; or they work too much or too little in God; or they have before them some subtle image. They know not that they must be naked and free, not only from all creatures but from themselves, and that their spirit must be raised above the power of the soul, whereby they may perceive the divine light and so be raised above all creatures unto God. So would they be like a ship in the open sea under full sail, which is speeding before the wind to the haven. But they remain as straying ships in mid ocean, which know not the haven but sometimes run aground or are driven by tempests on to the shores of some strange country; in the end they may even be wrecked and lost. In like manner these erring souls may perhaps remain for some time in their first fervour, but afterwards they fall back into nature, stray into strange opinions and fantasies, or else turn themselves to creatures and that to their own danger.

But it might be said that if one such persisted in his natural introversion he was near God, though not in God; but although in other matters he who is close by a thing may be said to enjoy it in part, in this case it is not so, for of the true presence of God we cannot

have piece or part, but must have all or none. Hence between these souls of whom we are treating and those who have rightly found God within them, there is a great difference, not only interiorly but in their outward lives and conversation, as may easily be perceived. For the one may well be good and virtuous, the other is heavenly and divine; the one class are *men*, and we find in them much that is very human; the others are earthly angels and are wholly dead to all that is human. This will appear hereafter, when we shall describe the interior dispositions of both.

Chapter the Fourth

The cause of the erring of the aforesaid souls.

Before we put these deceived souls into the right way, we must more fully show the cause of their errors, that, knowing it, they may avoid it. In the case of the first class of souls it is easy to see, but the defects of those last mentioned are far more hidden. These have both read and heard much of perfection, and know that God must not be sought with the imagination but in an interior rest and nakedness. But they set themselves to obtain this by natural working instead of by total abnegation, and though they imagine they are walking in naked faith, if they were closely examined it would be found that they walk rather according to their senses and behave with God as children. Some may have begun upon the right way but have either fallen in to some by-way or loitered on the road. They find the right way exceedingly narrow, our crafty nature has made by-ways on every side, and the soul often follows the body which, as a shadow, hides from her the right path; so it falls out that many good men who have begun well make a wrong ending. Others do not let themselves be drawn out

of the right way, but they loiter and go on slowly and faintly, whereas this way is all climbing, for it is against nature and sensuality, and admits of no standing still. Hence, little by little, they fall back into their first state. Yet others go on courageously, and greatly desire to persevere to the end, but meeting with obscurity, aridity, interior temptations and afflictions, they either decline from the way or stick fast, not knowing how to behave themselves in this state.

But the chief origin of all the errors of both the former and latter straying souls is that they, on their part, do not sufficiently endeavour to find God. They would have Him at too easy a cost, and all fail because they do not seek God at all times and places. This is the common fault, and the reason why so few truly find God. For if they did only use all diligence in their search, even if they were full of many defects known and unknown, in time they would discover these, and in time come into the right way, although they might wander at first. For by continually seeking God at all times and in all places nature is gradually weakened and subdued and, on the other hand, the spirit becomes more detached and elevated into God. Also, because of the soul's fidelity God would doubtless enlighten her and give her grace to overcome all hindrances and, at length, to find Him.

But the great obstacle in all these cases is want of perseverance and diligence. These souls are too great lovers of themselves, and neglect to perform

what they know must be performed before they can find God; or else, perhaps, they do not know what vigilant care they must exercise before they can find Him.

Truly it is difficult to convince souls of the difficulties to be passed unless they have already gone by the way. They cannot believe that there should be required such a total self-surrender, or such a continual perseverance without intermission or relaxation. They have been told that it is so, and they have read it in books, but they imagine it to be a shorter journey than the writers mean it. Perhaps this is because such writers express perfection in so few words, and also the way thereto. They speak of it as interior Death, Abnegation, Annihilation, which few words show the beginning and the ending of the way, but not what lies between, or how great be the distance. The words are short and intelligible, but mean more than we imagine. For the way is longer than from the one end of the world to the other, since perfection is union with God, to which the only way is to leave the whole world and all creatures.

The soul's progress in this way is like to that of a man who would sail a ship against the stream. Only with much labour could he do this, and as often as he neglected to struggle he would be driven back by the current, and lose all that he had previously gained. So it is with the way to God. Since the Fall all man's senses, powers and affections are diverted from God and run swiftly and continually

downwards through the midst of creatures, as a flowing river through the midst of the earth. The spirit is drawn downwards towards creatures as the barque by the stream, and if man desire to raise himself up to God, it is as though he struggled against the current. Since the inclination of his senses is ever towards earth and earthly things, he must resolve to labour and strive unceasingly against his natural affections and inclinations; otherwise, if he cease ever so little, they will carry him away from God, and he will lose all he may have already gained. All his senses, powers and affections (contrary to their natural inclination) he must compel inwards and draw upwards to God, for there is no perfect union with God where all the powers are not wholly absorbed in Him.

And although this happens without forcing the powers (as we shall show hereafter) in the beginning great diligence and vigilant observation of one's self is necessary, for the powers, senses and affections, being still unstable, cannot so soon rest quietly in God. Therefore, a beginner must use constant care and observation until these powers have become more firmly and quietly introverted to God, for the divine presence, which he seeks, must be kept at all times and everywhere. To this the whole man must apply himself, yet since all man's perseverance is so inconstant and unstable he will never find God rightly so long as he remains in his own strength; so that, besides the complete resignation of himself to God and annihilation of himself, he must come

into one constant *now* in which God is perfectly present. For albeit the soul does her utmost to seek God everywhere and at all times, it is not that God is properly so found in time and place, for He is far above them; but that the soul, hitherto all extroverted and lost amidst creatures, should, little by little, mount above herself, where she will find a constant eternity where God is present without any intermediary. It is because so few souls are found who so faithfully and constantly seek God that so few attain to true union with Him.

Chapter the Fifth

That the Soul's difficulties in this search proceed wholly from herself.

But speaking in this manner, do I not discourage all souls from seeking God, for such constant effort seems to be above the force of man, with his inbred instability and inconstancy? Who can perfectly amend all this wandering of the soul? Notwithstanding the matter must be thus clearly laid before the soul (otherwise she makes too light of it), and therefore we have forewarned souls of the length and difficulty of the way before we put them upon it. And, if they will understand us well, what we have said is not so difficult as it sounds; nay it is no more difficult than we ourselves make it. For the difficulty comes from us, not from God. It is not because God is so far from us, and so difficult to find, but that we are so far from Him, so unprepared and so slow to learn how He must be found. The devout soul who, with great difficulty, seeks God through many prolix meditations and corporal mortifications, or the unmortified soul who finds great difficulty in recollecting herself because of her bad inclinations, cannot justly say that God is hard

to be found. The one is seeking abroad what she has within, the other is willingly clinging to things from which she cannot free herself without difficulty. All the obstacles we find in our way to God are raised by ourselves, and but for them we should easily find Him. And truly the reason why many who have no great impediments in themselves do not find Him is because He may so easily be found. For as the soul can scarcely conceive how intimately God is present within her, so she can hardly understand how simply and plainly she must turn herself to this interior presence. Yet when once the soul knows this, nothing is easier to her, for since God is the last end, the life, the true centre and resting place of the soul, she has a natural inclination to Him as the stone has to the earth. A stone falls to the earth easily and of itself when it is loose; so, in like manner, of its own accord the spirit of man turns to God, and all the difficulty lies in the detachment of the soul from creatures and from herself. This does indeed cost labour and time, but he who does not understand these things seeks God with great care and solicitude, and gives himself needless work which he will afterwards find it hard to leave, yet leave it he must if he would proceed farther. This is why men usually say that the way to God is hidden, obscure and sublime, whereas all the obscurity and difficulty proceed from ourselves. We are so uplifted in our own judgment, and we would order divine things according to our crude human understanding, instead of ordering ourselves

to them. And as the right manner of seeking God is easily obtained so is it easily kept, and once the soul has found it she will have no labour or pain in retaining it, but will find rest, content and delight therein. In witness of this I will bring her S. Bonaventure in the book of the excellence of Divine Love; he compares the soul seeking God, and beginning to raise herself above herself to God, to one who climbs up a hill. The longer he climbs the more weary he is, and therefore he is forced to rest at times and refresh himself, after which he is able to ascend higher. But in this he differs from the man who ascends in spirit to God, for the latter, once he opens his eyes and is awake, must climb continually without resting; for *ascending to God is resting* and he who rests therefrom grows weary and is afterwards less disposed to climb, yea, it even happens that when he will rest he becomes weary, so that afterwards he can climb no more. Further on the saint continues, saying that if the spirit runs on apace it does so with joy, if it go slowly the way is wearisome and tedious, and if it rests it loses all its strength. The reason of the difference between these two climbers is that he who would climb a material hill must use violence in order to force his body to raise itself on high, contrary to its usual inclinations; hence he grows weary and must rest. But the spirit which ascends to God is light and has a natural inclination to aspire to and rest in God, therefore it no more becomes weary by mounting upwards than does the body by descending, but

is strengthened thereby. On the contrary, when the spirit rests from ascending, it necessarily falls back to the senses, which obscure, depress and hinder it, so that afterwards it cannot ascend. Consequently it is not refreshed by resting and standing still, but hindered and put back from its ascent to God.[1]

So that in this continual seeking of God is labour without pain, work without toil, travel without weariness, even with strength and refreshment. It is only in the beginning that to persevere in seeking God proves laborious to the soul, and that because she draws up the senses with her, not knowing how to proceed aright, since the spirit, nature and senses in the inward man are as yet too mingled together. But the more the soul perseveres in raising herself to God, even though this be laborious, the sooner will she be freed from all difficulty. Therefore, knowing that all the obstacles come from herself, and that God desires nothing more than to reveal Himself to her, and to be found and possessed by her, the soul should take courage, remembering His words *I stand at the door and knock*.[2] Since then she has dedicated herself to God, and seeks no rest in this world but only in Him, and for this end has begun to forsake herself; let her do it really and wholly, and not by halves. For what will it avail her to have set out upon the way and not to go through to the end, to seek and not to find? If

[1] S. Bon. Stimuli Amoris P. iii, c. 4.
[2] Apoc. iii, 20.

she has found it good to yield up part to God, why does she not give all, that she may be wholly in him? For part without the whole avails nothing. She has bravely put out to sea, let her go on until she reaches the haven rather than remain wandering in the ocean, or return with shame to the shore.

And if, perhaps, anyone has not sufficient courage to persist in this continual observation of himself in that manner which we have described as necessary, let him at least make a firm purpose of performing it for a certain time, long or short, rather than remain hanging in the midway, sometimes seeking God sometimes himself; now climbing, now falling; now going forwards, now backwards; this day making, to-morrow marring what was made. For he who performs all for a few months, will understand more and profit incomparably more than others who seek God only by halves for many years. The former will begin to find out how near God is in his soul, and will experience life in death, light in darkness, and this will mitigate his labour and pain, and encourage him to go on even to the end in this custody of himself. He will find that the more he mortifies, denies and leaves himself for God's sake, the easier and more delightful it will be, and he will confess that it is heavier and more painful labour by far to seek God by halves than wholly and absolutely.

At least let him who cannot, or will not, apply himself to this know that what we shall say hereafter is not for him, and that he will be unable either to comprehend it or to judge of it.

Chapter the Sixth

The manner of the way the Soul must walk to God.

We now proceed to lead into the right way those souls who are not wanting in good will, who desire to leave all and to do what is required of those who would find God. This may be done more easily by a simple comparison than by prolix and subtle reasoning, for often much reading rather hinders than helps souls, especially at the beginning. It comes to my mind that we must deal with these straying souls as we should with one who did not know where or what is the air, yet would gladly know how he should find it. For as the body is in the air, moves in it, enjoys it and lives in it, so is the soul in God, the enjoyment of whom is her life. This truth is sufficiently manifested by Faith, Scripture and Reason, so we need not use many words in confirmation of it, contenting ourselves with the saying of S. Paul, *In God we move, we live and we are.*[1] And if this seem strange to us it is not because it is strange in itself, but because we have become so estranged from our first nobility. For not only have we lost the state in which we were created and

[1] Acts xvii, 28.

established by God, but even the knowledge of it and of what belongs to our soul, so that whereas, according to our nature, we ought to live in God as a bird in the air, we creep along the ground like snails. But here we are taking man as he is created by God, and as he ought to endeavour to be, and as perfect men indeed are.

Now many souls imagine God to be far from them because they do not perceive His presence, and because they derive their knowledge of created things from images and imaginary considerations they think that they must apprehend God likewise. Yet God is as near to them as the air they breathe, and cannot be rightly conceived under any shape or form, no more than can the air. Again, if these men know that God is in them and they in Him, they take for God any interior light or motion which they perceive within them; if they come to an interior rest without forming of images they persuade themselves that they have certainly found God. Notwithstanding as long as they rest in that belief they are far from God, for all they imagine, behold, feel and deem to be God is incomparably less than God. And although the souls who have freed themselves from images are nearer than those who still make use of them, so long as this void is purely natural, and they are not wholly converted and given over to God, they do not possess Him. For this interior void of all shapes and forms is not God but the proper place for God; so that the soul must not rest therein, but leave herself wholly in

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the same that so she may enjoy God who is there, and enjoying Him may know Him. For God is a pure spirit who cannot be felt or seen, and of whom no shape or image can be framed, and He is infinitely raised above our natural being and forces. Therefore, let the soul know that He cannot be seen, or found, or known, but by tasting and enjoying Him, according to the prophet, *Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.*[1]

We must now consider the manner in which the soul must apply herself to God. First she must yield herself wholly captive to whatever our Faith teaches her to believe concerning God; that He is invisible, incomprehensible, insensible[2], and yet everywhere present unto her. She must leave off her former working with the imagination, as also her intellectual observations; neither must she believe that the light or void which she perceives in herself is God, for by so doing she does contrary to her faith. Further, she must leave off all seeking of God by her own activity. This is the first step once the soul has rid herself of sin and all gross impediments between God and herself, yet very few rightly understand it. Her conversion to God must be so simple and quiet that it may hardly properly be termed a seeking of Him. Since the soul has God always in her, and she is continually in Him, and can less easily lose Him than she could lose the air she breathes or her own self, she must not

[1] Ps. xxxiii, 9.

[2] i.e. not to be perceived by means of the senses.

seek God with anxiety, trouble or fear, but must turn herself to Him in perfect peace, rest and certainty. For God is only to be found in tranquillity and peace of mind, and there must be no anxious disquiet in her seeking.

Notwithstanding, I mean not this of an unmortified man and a beginner, who, though near to God by his essence, is far from Him by his affections and powers. Such an one is not aroused to love by the belief in God's presence, nor to seek Him in all things, and to such I do not speak. For the beginner must make use of his imagination and of forcible reasoning in order to draw his will from creatures and convert it to God, and must labour diligently in his search. Yet let him, little by little, try to exercise the faith of which we have spoken, and realise that he is not out of the being of God although, perhaps, he be out of His grace and friendship. And if he would perform his spiritual exercises profitably he must not act as though God were far from him, but believe that God is present within him, and endeavour by these exercises to free himself from all that holds him from God and to enkindle the love of God in his soul.

But the soul who, for God's sake, has separated herself from all creatures and is enlightened as to the true manner of God's presence in her, must not seek God by such working, for to do so is a defect from which few are free. It would seem that S. Bernard is speaking of this when he says: *Like as God is lovely so is He also wonderful: for when he is*

not sought he is found, and he is not found when he is sought.[1] The soul should remember this truth, and, holding fast by faith, never seek God actively no matter what may present itself to her, but turn herself to Him in quietness, peace and certainty, even though she may not perceive His presence at once. In such a case she should remain as quiet in mind and as well content as though she actually possessed God according as she wishes, for He is never a whit the less in her nor she in Him. If she keep herself in this tranquillity all impediments between God and herself must vanish little by little.

Having now abandoned all anxious seeking and laborious active means of conversion to God, the soul must diligently reflect upon the hidden presence of God within her. She must turn into herself and contemplate how God is in her and she in Him, and apply all her powers to this. Once she is assured by faith of the indwelling of God she will not find it difficult thus to unite her powers, for when the will knows assuredly that she has what she seeks, she remains content and no longer drives or forces her powers outward.

Once the soul is thus recollected she must reflect upon the presence of God with great simplicity, and without forming any image thereof. To this simplicity she must force her understanding, holding it captive in that faith which teaches her that God is invisible, insensible, and incomprehensible. At

[1] Possibly a loose quotation from S. Bern. De Dil. Deo P.L. clxxxii, col. 593.

first this is very difficult to the understanding, for it is contrary to its inclination and to its accustomed manner of proceeding; but the more this understanding is made captive, kept from all wandering, and blinded in the obscurity of faith, the sooner and better will the soul be able to apply herself to this simplicity. For when a man has distracted himself from this union with God, and poured himself out upon creatures, his understanding becomes so dissipated, entangled in creatures, and estranged from the divine unity, that it cannot be brought back again, and though it can, to some extent, keep itself from using external images, yet it will fly back to its former interior images and forms. So the soul must be blindfolded with the dark veil of faith, and imprisoned in all that faith teaches us concerning God.

Chapter the Seventh

Further consideration of this way of the Soul to God.

Hugh of S. Victor teaches that he who converts himself into himself, and, passing through himself, elevates himself, ascends rightly to God.[1] The reason is because God is so intimately present in the soul that he is said to be above her: hence S. Augustine says that God is more inward unto us than our interior. If this be so, God is also without and above us through the great inwardness, and therefore the soul cannot come to Him or enjoy Him until she pass through herself. We must now try to explain this hidden introversion of the soul and her elevation above herself; a difficult task, for we cannot make use of any external comparison. Let us suppose that a man would attentively consider how his soul is present in every part of his body, giving life to it. It is necessary that he withdraw all his senses and powers, not only from exterior things but even, as far as possible, from his own body. He must in no way consider himself, so as to form the least image, but must forget time, place, and all that is corporal; his

[1] De Amore Sponsi ad Sponsam P.L. clxxvi, col. 990.

very introversion must be vacant and, so far as possible, he must force his soul to the state wherein it will be when it is separated from the body. One who is very quiet in mind and well-disposed may in some sort perform this; but because he cannot thus stand with the soul, as it were, naked, nor can he remain thus interiorly simple and unified, he is unable to observe distinctly the presence of his soul in his body, but has only a kind of swift and transitory intelligence thereof.

But if a man would enter yet more profoundly into himself and, with still deeper introversion, convert himself to the very origin whence he thinks his soul to flow, and upon which depends his life and being, it would be needful for him to introvert all his powers, senses, and his whole soul not only from his body, but from his own self, and that with incomparably greater simplicity than before. The least cleaving to and working of the powers would here be a hindrance to him, and just as in order to enter into herself the soul must forget all external things as completely as though they did not exist, so, to rise above herself, she must forget even herself, as though she were not at all, and, thus naked and annihilated, must be elevated above herself by a still higher power. Nothing that she can do can reach so high, so that such introversion as this is impossible to the soul by her own powers. Nevertheless, such must be the state of the soul which would raise herself above herself to God, who is her origin, and upon whom she continually depends as

the beams depend upon the sun. Her powers must be utterly naked and simplified, so that, by a complete turning away from herself, she loses as perfectly her own image, as she has already lost the images and shapes of all exterior created things. Let us now consider more at length how this is necessary if the soul is to discover God.

Man was created to the image of God, and this image remains in him, although disfigured and defiled by sin. It is in and by this image that man must know God in him, and in so far—and no further—as he rightly discovers this image, so far does he find God in himself. And it is impossible for him to attain to God until he has found this image, cleansed it, and restored it to its first nobility and purity. For the interior power by which he must convert himself to God bears this image in it. Now so disfigured has this image of God become in some men, that it can no more be discerned than if it had never been there, and the only way to restore it to its first beauty and perfection is to cleanse and purify it until all that hinders the image of God from being perceived is taken away. This cleansing consists in a man's withdrawing his affections wholly and perfectly from all created things and, out of pure love, resigning himself wholly to God. By this means the divine likeness will daily become clearer, till at length it comes to its perfect beauty. The soul must thoroughly grasp this truth if she is to apply herself to what she shall be taught hereafter, for she must understand that the spirit must be re-

stored to that state in which it can enjoy God (and which has been lost through sin) more by abnegation, mortification, and resignation in God than by any activities of her own.

Chapter the Eighth

Three Signs by which the Soul may know that she is in the right way to God.

From what has been said the soul will now understand that the way to God is altogether strange and unusual and contrary to her wonted manner of proceeding. For to remain by one's self in that nakedness and abstraction from all created things, and in that interior silence, rest, introversion and elevation, is new and strange, as would be sea navigation to one who had never seen the sea. It is a great going forth from and mortifying of human inclinations, which very unwillingly depart from their own way, to commit the soul to what it knows not, and what is wholly above her power and prudence.

Thus must the soul follow in this way to God, leaving all creatures and her own will, sense, powers and affections, even her whole nature. In a continual abstraction and separation from all created things, she must render up herself to travel towards God, of whom she sees no sign, and, of whom she can have no certainty until she has actually found Him; resigning herself and relying wholly upon His mercy without knowing how it will succeed with

her. And just as the sailor cannot pass over the sea but by the help of the wind, and can only spread his sails in order to receive the forces of the wind, and so be carried to the haven, so the soul by her own strength can in no wise attain to God, but has need of His particular help. She must raise her spirit above the senses in order to receive the divine inflowing, acting again as does the sailor who commits himself as boldly to the sea as would another to the land, resigned to receive whatever wind may blow; after a bad wind he hopes for a better and, in the meantime, not only does his best with a half wind, but, even with the wind against him, strives to make headway and sail to his intended port, ever ready to take advantage of the least changing of the wind.

So, having taken leave of all creatures, the soul must stand, perfectly detached, relying wholly upon the divine inflowing, which will help her forward above herself as the wind does the ship. Sometimes this divine influx will be more abundant than at others; sometimes she will perceive no trace of it, and will be left wholly to herself; sometimes she will, as it were, sail against the wind, and find in herself only natural unwillingness and repugnance, or even temptation, all of which drive her back into her senses and nature. Hereafter we shall show her how to sail on, despite these contrary winds, and we shall give her an anchor to cast out, and therewith to remain fast, resting in God. Here we aim only at showing her how to apprehend this way to God,

of which we shall presently speak more. And that she may more confidently commit herself to this voyage we shall give her certain signs by which she may discern her way.

First of all, the soul, which has entered upon this way of complete detachment from creatures and resignation of herself to God, will always find herself sweetly and lovingly inclined towards God. This is because the soul is now freed from the chief hindrances and impediments which held her from God, and, whenever she is not actually elevated in Him, she inclines to Him naturally, her state of recollection and solitude favouring this inclination. And by this she is admonished at all times and places to fly evil and to embrace all good. Thus she is mindful of God even amidst exterior distractions, and she is forced to retire speedily to her interior solitude. The soul must trust in this inclination and take comfort in it, for the stronger she perceives it to be, the surer sign it is of her progress in the way to God. Moreover, she must be very careful not to extinguish this by too much anxiety and activity on her own part, but to give way to it, and follow whither it moves and points, never allowing herself to be drawn away by the senses. So doing, she will preserve her recollection, even amidst business, and when she is again free will be able to find God without difficulty.

Then if, at any time, the soul finds herself without light or knowledge, so that all in her is dark night, let her know that she has strayed from God,

having followed her own desires. She must return to God and be converted to Him again after long and faithful exercise, even amidst the obscurity, until she finds herself again in the right path. For the case when the soul has not taken good heed to herself, and so has lost her interior light, and that inclination to God, we shall presently give certain points of guidance.

Chapter the Ninth

Of the necessary preparation to find the Kingdom of God in the Soul.

The devout soul now begins to understand that she cannot attain to perfect union with God, her final end and happiness, by her own efforts, nor even doing her best with her ordinary grace. A special aid is needed from God, and all the soul can do is to obtain the necessary disposition in herself for this, so that she may obtain God's mercy and move Him to impart this grace unto her. This she is to do by the total detachment of herself from all things created and from herself.

And this agrees with what is commonly said by mystic writers, and lies at the base of all their teaching. In proportion as man forsakes creatures so he goes to God; as he forsakes himself so does God enter into him, and as he dies to himself so does God live in him. Creatures are at the beginning of the way; God is at the end. Now we cannot come to the end unless we leave the beginning, and the further we depart from the beginning the nearer we are to the end. Again, mystical writers teach that we must make a scale or ladder of creatures and ourselves by which to ascend to God, and the more a man ascends above creatures the nearer he

approaches to God. Moreover, they say that with God and the soul, as in nature, there is never a vacuum. If a vessel be emptied of the liquid it contained, at once it is filled with air. Hence it is that S. Augustine says: *You are a vessel but you are full ; pour forth that which you have already, that you may be filled with that which you have not ; pour forth the love of the world that you may be filled with the love of God.*[1] Again he says: *Think the love of man to be a hand in the soul ; if it hold anything fast it cannot hold any other thing, and to receive what it is commanded it must first let go what it holds.*[2] This is to be understood chiefly of the divine light, attraction and sensible feeling, for those who treat of the supreme perfection which contemplates God above His gifts, do openly affirm that nothing can find God but the *nothing* and Spiritual Death. The man who would contemplate God must die not only to all great sins and imperfections but even to himself; so that he has not taste or feeling in anything which is proper to man's corrupt nature, but is raised above the outward man in all purity and sanctity. S. Bernard teaches: *The eye which beholds a thing must have some likeness to it in clearness and purity.*[3] We are able to behold the sunbeams here on earth with our bodily eyes because these have some likeness to

[1] Probably a combination (freely translated and elaborated) of S. Aug. Enar. in Ps. cxxxvi. P.L. xxxvii, col. 1767 & Serm. ix de Diver. c, vii, P.L. xxxviii, cols. 81 & 85.
[2] S. Aug. Serm. cxxv, P.L. xxxviii, col. 694.
[3] S. Bern. Brevis Comm. in Cant. P.L. clxxxiv, col. 429.

the sunbeams in clearness, but the eyes have not the power to behold the sun in its own sphere. So, likewise, the soul who would contemplate God (who is an unspotted mirror of purity and brightness, a light in which there is no darkness) in so far as He may be contemplated in this life, and be united to Him, must be as perfectly conformed to God in purity of life as is possible in this world; hence it is said *Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.*[1] And S. Augustine says: *Like as this light cannot be seen but with clear eyes so in like manner God cannot be seen unless that be very pure and clean wherewith he is to be beheld ;* and again: *Such as are pure of heart have the privilege and power to see God, as having a clear eye to contemplate eternal things.*[2]

But it is not our intention here to teach at length how we are to obtain this purity and preparation for union with God, for there are other books which treat of this, to which we send the soul who needs this instruction. Here we intend only to declare what manner of preparation must take place in the soul which is to find the kingdom of God within her, and afterwards to show how God then stretches forth His helping hand and raises the soul to Himself.

Briefly, then, we say that this preparation must reach to a spiritual death and annihilation, and until the soul has come to that *nothing* and death the work of preparation is not done. And, truly, in order

[1] S. Matt. v, 8.

[2] S. Aug. De Serm. Dom. in Monte, col. 1232, P.L. xxxiv: and Serm. liii, col. 368, P.L. xxxviii.

to come hereafter unto the kingdom of God man must die, seeing that Christ Himself died before He entered into His kingdom; so the coming into God's kingdom in the soul must be preceded by spiritual death. By this death man dies to all that which he unjustly usurped when he was forced to leave the kingdom of God, wherein he was first created and constituted.

But before we treat in particular of this death and *nothing*, let us declare that we do not mean that the soul must lose her own being and creation or die according to them, but after such a spiritual manner that she becomes perfectly detached from creatures and from herself, so far as her affections are concerned, and so uplifted to God out of pure love that she forgets herself and creatures as though they were not. So long as the soul is not thus raised above herself she cannot be raised to God, for the presence of God which she is thereby to obtain is wholly divine; nor can it be obtained partially but only wholly, for it is nothing else but God Himself. True, she may obtain this preparation little by little, but until it be complete God does not show Himself in her after this perfect manner. For this *nothing* and death have no degrees. Water may be neither hot nor cold, and we call it lukewarm; a wall may be half white and half black mixed, and we call it grey; but if a man be alive we cannot say that he is dead, and if anything be something we cannot properly term it *nothing*.

Again, since the presence of God thus granted

to the soul is wholly divine, it cannot be broken up or divided; for where God is He is whole and entire and unmixed with creatures. True it is that in this state the soul may possess God in greater or less degree, but she has never anything but God while she has God, and she loses Him if she be in the least manner diverted to any image. But this must not be understood as though the soul must be perpetually without all inclinations, notions and feelings, for if this were so then no man in this world would ever find God truly. It suffices that, according to her free will, the soul should be so detached from all creatures and herself that she should never think of them any more than if they did not exist, and this through Eternity if God so willed. She must also have a firm purpose of persevering always in this detachment to the utmost of her power.

If the will be so fixed, even though the soul have in her some unmortified inclinations, we do yet consider that she is in a state to find God, although she will lose Him as often as she yields to temptation when assaulted by these unmortified passions. Nevertheless, she will recover this presence of God as soon as she turns from her faults and recovers her detachment. In this expression *Spiritual Annihilation* we include the entire preparation of the soul; we include renunciation, self-abnegation, charity, humility, all mortification and virtue required in the soul which is to be admitted into this interior kingdom of God. Let us now consider this preparation in some detail.

Chapter the Tenth

The former preparation is more particularly described.

We now proceed to show wherein this preparation consists, and what this precious *nothing* and spiritual death implies; which is not easily done.

God gave to man both his exterior being and his interior grace. This latter (for which the former exists) man lost by an act of disobedience and, instead of it, he has acquired a disorderly life of the senses, to rid himself of which may well provide him with work enough for all the days of his life, so hard is it to kill in himself this life of corrupt nature, and to return to that simplicity which he lost by sin. Hence it is that David says : *Because for thee we are killed all the day ; we are esteemed as sheep of slaughter,*[1] and holy Job termed the life of man *a continual warfare upon earth.*[2] Many men know of mortification and abnegation, but few come to the knowledge of their nothingness, and therefore God is truly known by very few. We must know that when man lost the happy state and that true life in which God had first placed him, he fell back

[1] Psalm xliii, 22. [2] Job vii, 1.

upon creatures through inordinate affections. First, he fell back upon himself, then upon exterior things, then upon the gifts of God, and last, in a wrong manner, upon God Himself, seeking in God only his (man's) own ease and interest, whereas we ought to seek only God's honour and good pleasure. Now all this life of self love must be thoroughly mortified and utterly destroyed before we can obtain true union with God.

It is easier for the devout soul to mortify her attachment to creatures than it is for her to be detached from herself, for, having nothing else left, nature clings to herself with all her strength. Just as in the case of natural death the last separation of soul and body costs the most, for upon it life and death depend, so when we have mortified and detached the soul from all external creatures, she much more subtly rests in herself, in the gifts of God, and, lastly and most secretly of all, in God, whom she seeks for the sake of her natural satisfaction and happiness. I say, therefore, that the right way to union with God is by an absolute abnegation as regards all created things, and a perfect resignation of the soul to God in pure love through a naked and habitual faith. Through this utter abnegation the soul dies to all external creatures; through perfect resignation she dies to herself; by pure love she dies to all the gifts of God, and by naked faith to God Himself, in so far as she sought her personal satisfaction in Him. And by this perfect *nothing* and death she is recollected and, at

length, made fit to be carried above and out of herself unto God. She obtains recollection in herself by abnegation of all external created things; by resignation she becomes simple and unified in herself; pure love converts her to God and opens to her a way above herself; and the naked faith fixes her therein. The knowledge which she has that God is within her quietens and quells all desires and longings, and in the centre of her soul her will is recollected in a high peace, where God is truly present. Thus she comes at last to that noble contemplation of God, for she has fully freed herself from all impediments which hindered her way to Him. She remains, as it were, with all her powers naked and converted to God who, that same instant, infuses into her His divine light, irradiating the pure soul which, simply for His love, has put herself into such a state of poverty and detachment from all things. So the spirit is raised to that happy enjoyment of God's secret presence to which she could never attain by herself. From such a soul God, out of His infinite goodness, no more witholds Himself than does the sun from shedding its beams into the clear air, or the running water from falling into the vessel which stands ready to receive it. As S. Cyprian says in his letter to Donatus: *Man has no need of great labour, pain or art, in order to reach the noblest and highest state to which he can come; for it is easily effected and a merciful and free gift of God. Like as the sun of itself shines, the day lightens, the fountain flows, so does the Holy Ghost spread and*

pour forth Himself into the heavenly soul after she acknowledges her creator.[1]

And the souls who do not find this in themselves, and do not attain to God, must know that it is merely for want of that perfect and pure resignation of which we have spoken, which, if they had it, would enable them, at all times and in all places, to work, speak and walk in God as easily as they do in the light of the sun at mid-day. They need no further proof that they are still possessed with inordinate affection to creatures and themselves than that they have little or no perception of God's presence within them. For nothing is less known to man than are his own defects, which are often many and great, whereas he thinks himself blameless. Therefore let him not deceive himself, but certainly believe that whenever he does not perceive the presence of God in him it is because some obstacle stands in the way; either he is clinging to some creature or he is not wholly resigned to God. Men do not find God because they do not seriously look into their own defects but imagine themselves faultless. Such souls should strictly examine themselves, otherwise if they presume to raise themselves to contemplate God it is to be feared that that will happen unto them which is set down in Exodus: *If any beast touch the mountain let them be stoned.*[2]

Of this S. Gregory says that *a beast touches the mountain when a soul yet subject to her unbridled concupiscences elevates herself to the height of contemplative*

[1] S. Cyp. Epist. ad Don. P.L. iv., cols. 225 and 226.
[2] Exod. xix, 13.

life; and because she cannot remain so high she is thrown down and stoned to death.[1] And truly how can she remain elevated above herself who lies yet fast bound under herself; what can she receive else from above but stones instead of light, death in place of life, who thus unprepared intrudes herself into the terrible and dreadful sight of God? We know that the material sun acts upon matter according to the disposition of the latter; it hardens dust and softens wax; it dims and hurts weak or diseased eyes, but enlightens eyes which are sound. So it is with the divine light which cannot enlighten souls which are proud, unmortified and obdurate. As S. Bernard says: *Like as ashes cast into our bodily eyes cause them to water and run and dim their sight, in like manner bad interior motions disorder the interior eye of the soul*[2] so that she cannot enjoy the clearness of the divine light but is thereby more darkened. And S. Gregory well says that when God spoke to Moses upon the mount Sinai He showed Himself in the likeness of fire, and out of the fire issued smoke as out of a furnace. For *God,* he says, *illumines the humble with his charity and dims the eyes of the proud through obscurity of ignorance.* Furthermore, he says that *we must first purge our mind from all temporal honour and desires of carnal concupiscences and then raise it up to the height of contemplation*[3]

[1] S. Greg. Mor. lib. vii, P.L. lxxv, col. 763.

[2] S. Bern. Serm. de Conver. ad Cler. P.L. clxxxii, col. 851.

[3] A combination of S. Greg. Mor. vii, 58. P.L. lxxv, col. 763 and Mor. v, 53. P.L. lxxv, col. 708.

And those who, through weakness of mind, are detained as yet with temporal things ought not to presume to consider those high and sublime matters. In yet another place, when describing in particular what is required in that soul which desires to contemplate God, the same holy doctor says that *besides a perfect cessation from all imperfections she* (the soul) *must be able to turn away from all images, even of her own self, that so she may be elevated above herself to God.*[1] Daily experience teaches us that many such unmortified souls, who presume thus to aspire above themselves, are overcome by the temptations which press upon them, and, as the Apostle says, *having begun in spirit end in flesh.*[2]

And by the unprepared man we do not understand great sinners, but such as make a show of spirituality and yet retain in themselves some permanent imperfections of daily sin, in which they rest willingly, and which they will not mortify. Although such persons do not live in great sin, yet they are not fit to comprehend, much less to practise, the divine doctrine of which we are about to treat. For it is *a wisdom which is not found in the land of them who live pleasantly,*[3] but is that union with God and experience of ' is presence of which God Himself has said: *Man shall not see me and live,*[4] and the Apostle: *Who dwells in an inaccessible light*

[1] S. Greg. Mor. v, 61-62. P.L. lxxv, col. 713.
[2] Gal. iii, 3.
[3] Job xxviii, 13.
[4] Ex. xxiii, 20.

which never living man saw or can see.[1] For, as we have said, as regards all self love and sensuality, the man who would thus contemplate God must be wholly dead.

Let everyone, therefore, behold himself in this looking-glass, and consider well whether he have this necessary preparation, and first let him endeavour to have it before he proceed further. Neither let him persuade himself that he has reached the end before he has gone the whole way; let him wholly leave and die to himself if he would be admitted into this kingdom of God which is within him; finally let him make himself pure and clear and like to God, if he would contemplate God in such a manner as we shall teach hereafter.

The points of guidance which we are about to give will serve also for those persons who commonly oppose a spiritual life because they are ignorant thereof, and do not perceive in themselves the things of which they read or hear. They consider such matters to be fables and inventions, the deceptions of the devil or, at least, of spiritual pride whereby men falsely ascribe spiritual experiences to themselves. Such persons ought not to judge what is altogether unknown to them, and since they believe that hereafter there shall be diversity of degrees in the heavenly glory, they should grant that so also there have always been, and are, different degrees of holiness among the servants of God in the Church Militant

[1] I. Tim. vi, 16.

God has always had servants, friends, children and spouses. It is no wonder that, in the King's court, the servants who do the baser works know not of what the king treats in his private chamber with his friends, much less with his children, and least of all with his beloved spouse. The soul of which we speak is a chosen spouse of Christ, chosen from among the multitude of ordinary living men, and led to the secret chamber of God, her bridegroom. There she lives and converses; she is admitted into that kingdom of God and possesses it, although she seems to be yet on earth. And although these superficial men do not understand this, or cannot distinguish between their own state and that of these illuminated souls, they should recognise that such a disposition can exist. Such unspiritual men are so deeply sunk in nature and their senses that they do not know what the *Spirit* is, much less what is done in it when it is raised to God above all transitory things, as is the case with illuminated souls. But if they would put into practice the abnegation and resignation of which we speak they would soon find the truth, and what they read or hear concerning the spiritual life would cease to be incredible to them. If they lack the courage to do this, they should not marvel if others, who faithfully apply themselves thereto, find out strange things unknown to them. For these resigned and perfect souls have broken through themselves and all created things, and have made a passage from time to eternity, out of creatures unto God, out of

their nature and natural powers, above themselves in pure *Spirit;* and there they live and converse. And truly if this were noted and considered, I do believe that all disputes against a spiritual life would cease. For the truly spiritual soul differs from the man who is wholly external, and is as widely separated from him as one who remains on land is from him who is in the midst of the sea. These spiritual and enlightened men converse here on earth as others, yet interiorly they are completely detached and wholly resigned to God; they seem to lead a common life with others, but interiorly they remain in angelic purity, and being pure in heart they see God. For whereas other virtuous people place their exercise in mortifying bad desires, affections and concupiscences, these exercise themselves in mortifying all images and forms, which S. Bernard calls a *Mortification of Angels.*[1]

We may justly say of spiritual men what S. Jerome said of priests: *The tongue, mind and hand of a priest ought to agree all in one.*[2] So likewise in a spiritual man nothing should be seen but what is of the spirit; all his works and omissions ought to be witnesses of his words. No man should speak of this secret union of the spirit with God in whose life and conversation is not found the disposition which we are about to declare, or at least the sincere desire of the same. Neither ought any to think it strange to hear of one, in whose life may be observed this disposition which surpasseth flesh and blood.

[1] S. Bern. Serm. lii in Cant. P.L. clxxxiii, col. 1031.
[2] S. Jer. Epist. lii ad Nepot: P.L. xxii, col. 533.

Chapter the Eleventh

Of the absolute Abnegation of all created things and the Signs by which one may know whether he hath it or no.

The way of the soul to God begins by the renunciation of all external creatures, for to them the soul turned when she left God, and in them she rests. Therefore it is impossible that he who does not begin at this end of the way can come to the other end which is God. Hence it is that Christ, the Master of Perfection, would always have that those who entered upon the way of perfection should first of all leave all that they possessed. Thus He said to the young man: *If thou wilt be perfect go and sell all that thou hast, etc.*,[1] and again: *Unless you renounce all that you have you cannot be my disciple.*[2]

Climacus calls this external abnegation the way to God without impediment,[3] and S. Bonaventure says that, like as concupiscence is the very cause and groundwork of all sin and wickedness in like manner abnegation of all creatures and voluntary poverty is

[1] Mark x, 21

[2] Luke xiv, 33.

[3] S. Joan. Clim. Scala Paradisi P.G. lxxxvii, col. 639.

the foundation of all evangelical perfection.[1] And therefore Christ began from hence His sermon of the eight Beatitudes saying: *Blessed are the poor of spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*[2] And whereas in the other beatitudes He only promises happiness He says that the poor have it already, for the soul having been stripped of all earthly possessions and anxieties is placed in rest and peace of heart. There God is present, for His place is in peace and solitude. Hence Peter Damian well says that when we have renounced our own propriety we make heaven proper unto us and consequently we to it.[3] But how necessary it is to forsake all temporal goods our Saviour could not more strongly express than by saying: *It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*[4] For if the soul would find God she must first enter into herself, for she is out of herself so far, and in as many places as are the things which she loves and to which she is attached; and although as long as this life lasts the soul is united to the body, yet it is a true saying that the soul is more where it loves than where it lives,[5] and our Saviour says *where*

[1] S. Bona. Serm. II de Temp. in Dom. Oct. Pasc, T. xiii. p. 232 (Peltier, Paris 1868).

[2] S. Bona. Expos. in Ev. S. Luc. cap. vi, T. x. p. 367-8.

[3] S. Pet. Dam. De Contemp. Saeculi, Opus xii, P.L. cxlv, cols. 254-5.

[4] Matt. xix, 24.

[5] Quotation is literally from Bld. Albert the Great's treatise *On Union with God*, c. xii.

thy treasure is there is thy heart also.[1] As the soul departs from herself through the love of creatures, so through the renunciation of them she returns to herself. Hence we say that the first thing the soul must do to come to God is to withdraw her affection from creatures, and not only from creatures to which she clings with any inordinate love, but from all to which she has any attachment which may come between her and God.

The spiritual man must retain no attachment to, or desire of, anything which he would not willingly forsake for God. Even those things which necessity requires he should use with moderation and be content to be deprived of them, even willingly to suffer himself to perish from the want of them, if such were God's holy will and pleasure. So the soul which truly seeks God must not have the least affection to any external creature which is not purely for God, and creatures as such should be no more to her than if they did not exist.

But it is much easier to show the soul that she must forsake all creatures without than to make her know whether she retains any affection to creatures within. *For the heart of man is inscrutable and hard to be known even to man himself.*[2] And most difficult of all is it for man to know his own self-love, for this clings very subtly to what is pleasing to it, and most of all is this so when the interior attachment is of a kind which hurts the spiritual life, since our fallen

[1] Matt. vi, 21.
[2] Jer. xvii, 9.

nature masks the inclination. Therefore many spiritual men deceive themselves who think that they have renounced and left all for God, whereas in very truth within themselves they are possessed by many affections, which they know not or which they think are of small importance. Because such attachments do not seem bad they make light of them, nevertheless such are in themselves a form of sensuality. Truly unless a man be stripped of all possession of external things and altogether confident in God as to temporal necessities, it is difficult to see whether he is not clinging inordinately to something. For affection often lurks under show of necessity, and attachments are often unknown to the soul until she is perfectly converted to God. For then she sees her inordinate clinging to the creature for she is raised above all creatures and above herself; then she must at once leave that to which she is attached, or else she finds herself hindered in her approach to God. It may well be that at first a man does not realise that he is attached to creatures when they come into his mind, but thinks it merely a distraction; but when he actually uses the thing, or is busy and solicitous about it, he will soon see whether he has any affection towards it, since without some attachment this anxiety cannot exist, and such attachment must come between God and the soul.

And because it is very uncertain whether a man have this pure conversion to God, and we are here speaking of such as either have it or would gladly

attain to it, let nobody be confident but each turn to himself, and consider whether in truth he be content to forsake all created things for God: honour, riches, friends, ease, human conversation and in general whatever can yield him any pleasure. This applies also to corporal necessities, for even although he knew that the use and possession of them could not hinder his progress or be displeasing to God, he knows well that a truly detached life, stripped of all things, is more becoming a servant of God and more conformable to Christ.

Having assured himself of his ground thus far, if he have utterly renounced all created things and love God solely, he will hold himself well content, and he will find himself drawn thereto with joy of heart. Observe further, that when, having thus detached himself, he perceives that his mind is empty of created things he finds he can easily and with delight hold his soul in this state, and it becomes ever more perfectly detached and simple. This follows of necessity, for man's mind of its own nature is clear and pure but has become soiled by affection to creatures; when it renounces this affection it returns to its primitive clearness, as a glass recovers its former brightness when washed of its stains.

But if a man does not perceive this mind in himself let him know that he is possessed by some inordinate affection, and if he cannot discover where it is he must search further into himself. He must see whether he retains the use and possession of creatures purely for God's sake or for any human

consideration; whether there are yet human attachments of which he might rid himself, or whether such actually help him towards God. Likewise he must search diligently into himself to see whether he hopes for, or fears anything, or whether he is either grieved or delighted by exterior things. For from these considerations he may judge of the state of his soul. Again let him examine how he has behaved when deprived of things he used or possessed, for what we possessed only for God we can leave joyfully. So affirms a certain spiritual teacher, when giving three signs whereby we may know whether we cling inordinately to those exterior things which we possess. Firstly, if of all his goods a man take no more than necessity requires, as though he had begged them from door to door and was always to do so; secondly, if he knew that another had need of his goods, he would be content that the other should use them as freely as himself, and wish as well to him as to himself; thirdly, that in case he lost them he would be as quiet in his mind and will as though he had never had them.[1] By these signs a man may learn to know the hidden grounds of his heart, and also to esteem rightly small things; for nothing should be deemed small which deprives us of God or hinders our union with Him. For if a bird be tied fast to the ground or to a bough it is all one whether it be fastened by a cord or a thread; in any case it cannot rise into the air. So it is with the soul of man, which is created to live in God

[1] Tauler, Inst, c. 32.

as the bird in the air, but is hindered in its heavenward flight by attachment to creatures, be that attachment never so slight. The least time misspent through an earthly affection hinders union with God, and although the less inordinate the attachment be the nearer the spirit may come to God, yet it is never perfectly united to Him, but held back until such time as it is detached from all that is not God. But this can hardly be perceived until the soul actually uplifts herself to God, for so long as she is bent downwards she is like the captive bird, which only discovers that it is so when it tries to fly. Therefore let the man who finds that he is out of God, and would return to Him examine himself as to whether there be anything which he could hardly leave, and resolve to cast it from him. And in order to attain to absolute renunciation of all created things let him consider the vanity, instability and baseness of all these inferior things which, were they all taken together, would not be worth the love of the noble heart of man for one moment of time. They were all created for man and not man for them; they are common to the lower animals, and must all be left one day whether we will or no, whilst, in the meantime, they disquiet and vex our minds and hinder our union with God. But the chief consideration which will move him to this renunciation is that of the poverty of Christ, which (as S. Bernard says) is the strongest argument to make us embrace and seek after exterior poverty. Moreover, he says that Christ coming into the world to demonstrate

how grateful poverty was to Him, *revealed himself first of all unto poor shepherds. How many potentates and wise men lay at that house on soft beds and none of them were found worthy to behold that new light and understand that joyful news and to hear the angels sing.*[1] And thence conclude if Christ showed such love to the poor who were so through necessity, how much more willingly to such as are voluntarily poor will He exhibit His presence in this life!

And in another place the same saint says: *Blessed are the poor in spirit. Truly He in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, hath opened His mouth. And this is His doctrine whereof, speaking in the Book of Revelation, he says: Behold I make all things new. Who, by His prophet, said I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. For what is more hidden than that Poverty should be blessed? Notwithstanding Truth affirms it who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Blessed are the poor of spirit! How come you then, O foolish children of Adam, to seek after riches, to desire wealth considering that the blessedness of the poor is avouched by God, commended to the world and believed by men! Let a heathen seek them who lives without God. Let a Jew desire them who has received temporal promises; but with what face, or rather with what heart, can a Christian seek for riches, seeing that Christ has pronounced the poor to be blessed and has threatened the rich with woe?*[2]

[1] S. Bern. Serm. iv, In Nat. Dom. P.L. clxxxiii, col. 125.

[2] S. Bern. Serm. in *Videns Jesus turbas.* P.L. clxxxiii, col. 456.

By these words we clearly see how necessary is perfect abnegation and renunciation of all created things. Wherefore a man should constantly endeavour to apply himself seriously thereunto and, once he perceives that he is willing to yield up all created things, he must often stir up in himself the longing to become thoroughly poor and detached for God. And let him dilate his heart therein as long as possible, for by so doing his interior sensible affections will be more and more withdrawn, so that he will be able to be raised in spirit to God. For although a man may have renounced all for the love of God with his free will, the sensitive part of the soul may yet cling somewhat to creatures, and so cause some disquiet and hinder the perfect rest of the soul in God.

Therefore, with all possible joy, must a man make this renunciation, otherwise he is far from that dying to himself which is required of a contemplative soul; for as S. Cyprian says: *Even as mine eyes cannot behold heaven and earth both at once, so the love of God and the love of the world cannot be both together in the soul.*[1]

[1] Possibly a very loosely quoted version of Cyp. *Lib. de Laude Mart.* P.L. iv, col. 833.

Chapter the Twelfth

Of the perfect resignation of one's self to God and of the signs whereby to know it.

The soul which would come to God must also deny and leave her own self. This S. Gregory plainly affirms, saying: *As much as we leave ourselves we approach to God*;[1] for as long as the soul remains under herself or in herself she cannot be raised to God above herself. And just as when she clings to any exterior creature the soul is resting out of herself, so is she under herself when she is inordinately attached to the pleasures and comforts of the body, and within herself when she complacently rests in her own will, judgment or work, or otherwise loves herself excessively. For as S. Dionysius says: *Love is a uniting power*[2] and subjects, inclines and unites as much as it can the lover with the beloved, whatsoever it be. Therefore, when the soul loves herself for herself, by that love she is subjected to herself, and

[1] S. Greg. Homil. in Evan. xxxii, P.L. lxxvi, col. 1234.

[2] As quoted here the words are found in the *Summa* of S. Thomas I. 2. quaest 28 a.1., and II. 2. quaest 28, a. 9. They are a summary of the teaching of pseudo-Dionysius as found *De Div. Nom.* cap. iv. lect. 9, 12, and especially 14. P.G. iii, col. 714.

when she abandons her self-love she is set free from herself, just as she was set free from all external creatures by forsaking them.

But, because when the soul no longer rests in herself she must necessarily rest elsewhere, we call this abnegation of self a resignation to God. By self abnegation the soul may go and rest in God, and because she may be as great a hindrance to herself as are external things, we say that this resignation must be as perfect as the other. By her first forsaking of creatures she becomes as free and naked as though they did not exist, so by this forsaking of herself she becomes as detached from herself as though she were not. But this second resignation is much more laborious than the first, for nature loves herself much more, and departs from herself with greater difficulty than from all exterior things; as S. Gregory tells us: *It is a small matter and easy to leave exterior goods, but it is very much to leave ourselves.*[1] Therefore the soul which fails to find God in herself as she desires may justly suspect that she is not yet sufficiently surrendered to Him, although her subtle nature (which can easily deceive her on this matter) would gladly persuade her to the contrary.

And, to attain to this, first it is to be observed that the want of resignation, which is the cause of all man's worries and anxieties and holds him out of God, proceeds from self-will and self-love; and by these he may rest in himself very thoroughly even though he may have forsaken all exterior creatures.

[1] S. Greg. Hom. in Ev. xxxii. P.L. lxxvi, col. 1233.

He rests in himself through his own *judgment* when he clings to his own opinion and choice, and will not be drawn therefrom, but rather desires that others should yield to him and be of his mind. He rests in himself through *self-will* when he wishes to choose for himself and seeks to fulfil his own desires, being unwilling to conform himself to the will of others. And when he is denied what he wants he becomes melancholy and disturbed, which is a sure sign of self-love which in all things seeks her own end, comfort and convenience either exterior or interior, and this through an inbred and natural inclination of the soul to herself; and this may be found in those who have taken upon themselves voluntary poverty. Yet all this must be utterly rooted out before the soul can find God, for that man must be as though he had no understanding, or will, or love, or care of himself, saying with the prophet: *As a beast I am become with thee and I* [*am*] *always with thee.*[1] In such wise he relies no more upon his own judgment, opinion and choice than upon that of another; resigning and submitting himself without resistance as occasion may require; choosing rather to follow other men's judgments than that they should follow his, and that others should command him rather than that he should command.

Moreover, whatever God suffers to happen to him, either exteriorly or interiorly, is to be as welcome to him as that which he most of all desires. He must even subject himself in this manner, not

[1] Ps. lxxii, 23.

only unto God, but also unto all creatures for God's sake, no matter how unreasonably or impertinently these may behave themselves towards him, and this without repining, demur or excuse further than actual necessity may require. How profound must be this resignation and submission to God, and to all men for God's sake, we may better know by these two examples.

A spiritual teacher says that a man ought to be as resigned to God as though he were afloat in the midst of the sea sitting upon his cloak.[1] Such an one certainly could not trust to his own hands or feet, or to any bodily or spiritual strength and industry, or to the help of any creature, but must simply resign himself to the mercy of God, to be relieved by Him in such manner as should best please His divine goodness. And if it pleased God that he should be drowned he ought to be resigned, knowing that there is no injustice done to him thereby. In this manner also must a resigned person rest always upon the naked will of God without any human choice or preference; willingly accepting whatever happens to either his body or his soul; firmly believing that all comes from God, and by his permission, and that whatever happens, no injury is done to him.

Another example of a detached man, as compared with other men, is that used by S. Francis. Take a dead body, adorn him, honour him, praise him as much as you will, he is not a whit the prouder but remains as before; blame him, despise him, belittle

[1] *Suso. Serm.* xi (ed. Thiriot, Paris, 1899).

him, he still remains as before; injure him and abuse him as you please, he does not answer, he does not repine. Thus must a perfectly resigned man be to God. Whenever he is ill-treated by others, whatever they say or do to him, whether he be in the right or the wrong, he takes it all indifferently from the hands of God without troubling or vexing either himself or others. Such a man is said to be elevated above himself into God, so that in order to obtain this perfect resignation he must have renounced all creatures, and abandoned himself body and soul to do, omit or suffer whatever God requires of him, or permits to fall upon him either in time or in eternity, even though it were to suffer the pains of hell. He must yet neither desire nor seek to have or suffer such (were it in his power so to do), otherwise than as God may choose or permit.

Hence, if a man does not find God he must diligently examine himself to see whether he be defective in this resignation, and this the more in that nothing of the kind shows itself in particular; for notwithstanding there is certainly some hindrance and interior obstacle between him and God, who sees his inmost soul and so cannot give His light and grace save in proportion as that soul is clean and pure. The soul may be hindered in raising herself to God just as effectively by what she knows not as by what she knows, therefore a man must not content himself too easily, although he think himself perfectly resigned. For he may think that there is nothing which he would not willingly do or suffer

for God so long as neither the work nor the suffering is actually present and perhaps may never happen to him; for our will easily yields itself in imagination as it would not perhaps if the work or suffering were actually present.

Let us, therefore, consider how we have behaved ourselves in the past, and do actually behave ourselves whenever we have to do or suffer anything for God, either interiorly or exteriorly. Let us note whether we have sought to avoid it or to be freed from it, for if we act thus in small matters what should we do under greater trials? Again let us examine well how we daily spend our time, whether we do not often willingly occupy ourselves in unprofitable works, or whether, in those necessary works we do for God, we repine or seek anything else but God. If we find that we are defective in these matters we may well judge that we are not disposed to leave, suffer and do all for God, seeing that we fail so far in what is within our power.

But if anyone be really persuaded that he is perfectly resigned to God let him, for more assurance, thus try himself. Let him suppose that he is actually deprived of all temporal goods, honours, comforts, ease, and all human conversation which in any way affords him consolation; that God permits him to be at once assailed with all bodily pains, and overwhelmed with interior aridity and anguish of soul; and, besides all this, that he is despised, rejected and persecuted by all, without knowing when all this shall have an end. If in all this he can resign himself

willingly and joyfully, and, if he were free to choose, would rather remain thus all his life than in all pleasures and consolations, interior and exterior, so he should not offend God and endanger his salvation, then he may believe that he is perfectly detached and resigned to God.

Moreover, he should observe whether in the inward part of his soul he perceive a certain nearness to God, for this must necessarily follow if the aforesaid resignation be real, since, being purified and ennobled and raised above all attachment, the mind can now realise this nearness of God. Hence this is the surest sign of all and must be noted, for if the soul does not perceive it, or perceives it very slightly, she should persuade herself that she is not as resigned as she imagines. She should examine herself as to what she most desires, most fears, in what she most rejoices, and at what she most grieves among all the things that do or can occur, for thus she will discover her own interior dispositions. Not that she is to imagine all painful things in particular, but simply turn in to herself and see to what she is inclined.

And if she find that she has not this perfect resignation she must not marvel if she does not find God rightly. For a man may be freed from all attachment to created things but yet be interiorly possessed by the love of himself, so that he clings to himself and does not rise above his own operations. Let him therefore no longer seek vainly to raise his spirit to God in this state

but set himself to obtain the perfect detachment necessary.

In order to do this let each one make use of such considerations as may influence him most strongly, of which the most helpful are these: that we were created for God; that as regards both body and soul man is continually dependent upon God as the beams are on the sun; that without God he can do nothing, and could not subsist one moment; that man's nobility chiefly consists in this resignation, and that out of this he can expect neither rest, peace nor quietness. And let it be well understood that the soul may have attained to this perfect resignation in God, yielding and abandoning herself completely so far as her free will is concerned, even while she is conscious of natural aversion and sensitive resistance which she cannot overcome. Let her not, therefore, be alarmed or dismayed but rest in that submission of her will of which she is conscious, and little by little she will overcome her natural resistance. For the interior relish for spiritual things, and the light infused into the soul as a result of this resignation of the will, makes nature more pliable and submissive.

But if she do not always find that taste for holy things which she expected, and it seem to her that she is unresigned even though she knows not wherein, but knows that she is content to forsake whatever God may require of her; then let her be resigned in this irresignation. Let her willingly suffer the privation of sensible satisfaction, yet never in the

least degree ceasing to offer and resign herself to God in her will.

And truly, as the saints have said, this perfect resignation is not so hard. S. Augustine says: *What is so yours as you, and what so not yours as you, if that it pertain to another what you are? For like all that a beast has and is belongs to man, so much more does man belong to God.*[1] Likewise we have S. Chrysostom reminding us thus: *Being that we live through Christ, therefore, we ought not to live but to Him by whom we live;*[2] whilst S. Bernard, considering the great obligation we have to God, breaks out into these words: *If I be debtor of myself wholly because He has made me, what shall I give Him for redeeming and repairing me after so strange a manner? For I was not so easily mended as I was made. For He that made me with only one word once spoken, in repairing me again spoke many things, and wrought wondrous things and endured most painful things, and not only painful things but things most unworthy. By His first work He gave me myself, by His second work He bestowed Himself upon me, and bestowing Himself He restored me to myself. Being given therefore and restored I owe myself and am twice debtor of myself. What shall I render unto God now for myself? For though I could a thousand times lay down myself what am I to God?*[3]

[1] S. Aug. Tract. xxix in Joan. P.L. xxxv, col. 1629 (the author has elaborated the original).

[2] S. Chrys. Hom. xxxiv in Gen. Migne iv, col. 319-20.

[3] S. Bern. Lib. de Dil. Deo. P.L. clxxxii, col. 983.

Thus did these holy Fathers incite themselves to a perfect resignation to God, without thinking of pleasing or displeasing themselves, rendering up unto Him all their power of choice, their desire and their will.

Chapter the Thirteenth

Of the pure Love of God and by what signs we may know it.

When once man has withdrawn his affection from all creatures by perfect abnegation and likewise from himself by pure resignation, with his whole affection and adhesion he falls upon the gifts of God. For out of his infinite goodness God presently rewards this abnegation and resignation with interior light, devotion, consolation and strength, to which nature at once turns and rests rightly, just as she formerly rested in exterior creatures. When this comfort is withdrawn she is impatient, and grieves until she again obtains it, and besides all this she rejoices and exults in the consideration of the future reward, and therein rests.

But although in this life man may well enjoy the interior gifts of God (for to that end they were given him) yet, nevertheless, they greatly hinder him when he clings to them or rests in them, and are as great an obstacle to perfect union with God as are attachments to exterior things. In like manner, although it is not only lawful, but virtuous and good, to hope for and long after the future happiness, yet inasmuch as it is done for man's own sake (in that

therein he is seeking his own comfort, profit and good) and not simply with a perfect resignation to God, it likewise hinders him from dying to himself and attaining perfect union with God.

Therefore if the soul is to find God the third thing necessary is that the abnegation of all creatures, and of herself, be done purely for the love of God. When this pure love of God is joined to the perfect detachment, the soul is lifted above herself unto God. The soul which neither seeks not desires anything for herself, neither happiness nor honour, nor anything through self-love is carried wholly unto God. She has but one perfect desire, to be led by the King into His nuptial chamber and to adhere solely to Him; so that, continually beholding Him face to face, she is transformed into the same image, from glory to glory as from our Lord's own spirit.

This pure love of God consists herein, that a man absolutely deny himself all created things, and render up himself wholly unto God without seeking therein any merit, comfort, profit or benefit, interior or exterior, temporal or spiritual, but purely for God. For to God he belongs, God has deserved this at his hands, and God only deserves it; and he should hold himself therewith content without seeking aught else, not even that sensible feeling of God which is thereby engendered in the soul. This love is pure, for God is sought only for Himself.

Neither must a man believe too hastily that he has this love, for he may be more easily deceived here than in either of the two former points. For

this love is contrary to man's nature as it is now, for having fallen from God he is wholly bent towards himself, and in all his doings and omissions he continually has an eye to his own profit, convenience or comfort. This has become natural to him, hence it is difficult to reclaim him from it, and it is very rarely that one is found who does not in some manner seek himself in God, at least in desiring experimental feeling of Him. Moreover, this nature works very subtly and secretly, so that it is exceedingly difficult to give a certain sign whereby one may know whether he have the pure love of God or no, especially so long as he has this sensible relish and devotion. It would be necessary that the soul should have tasted God in himself, above all God's gifts, before he could tell whether or no he loves God purely; for by the least self-love the soul herself becomes obscure, and loses the noble presence of God *sine medio* without any *mean*.

Notwithstanding, to give the beginner a sign whereby he may judge of his love, let him turn away his attention from all gifts which he actually has or could have and, beholding God purely in himself, asks himself whether, albeit there were no heaven to be expected hereafter, nor any reward in this life; or if God were never to manifest Himself unto him, he would yet willingly forsake all things and resign himself wholly unto God, purely because He is God.

And, to be yet more certain, let him further ask himself whether, supposing he knew that by God's

justice he were to be damned eternally hereafter, and remain in this life in continual aridity, he would rather choose to serve God in this abnegation and resignation than to enjoy all liberty and pleasure, interior and exterior. If he can assent to this from his heart he will perceive in himself a divine light which will invite him to be raised above himself in God, but if he cannot so speak let him be persuaded that he does not yet love God so purely as is necessary for the divine enlightening and elevation. For, like as abnegation and abandonment produce in the soul a nakedness and clearness, so does this pure love raise it to God; for it is proper to love so to do, and especially this which is altogether clear and simple.

But if a man has asked himself all that we have here put down, and yet perceived little or no clearness in his soul, he must believe he is yet possessed by self-love, though it be very secret, therefore he must diligently search into the depths of his soul and consider his intention. He should examine himself as to his aim and intention in his spiritual exercises; whether he seek God alone or rather some sensible devotion, or some image, light or knowledge infused into his interior powers, which he receives as coming from God, but dares not adore as God Himself. Let him consider whether he rests in and clings to this sensible devotion; whether he fears to lose it, and whether, if it be withdrawn, he is troubled and impatient and inclined to seek comfort in creatures. This is an

evident sign of self-love, and if such a man examine himself carefully, he will find that in all his turning to God he is always looking upon and seeking himself. Hence, although his object have in it something of the divine, he never advances further than to enjoy himself therein. Such a one must know that as long as he thus seeks himself in God he will never be perfectly united to God. He may have left all things, and even in a measure left himself, for God, but he is clinging to God's gifts and not to God Himself. It is in this want of purity in their love that so many fail who have sincerely practised the previous abnegation and resignation. They have thrown open the way to God, but they remain captive to a sensible devotion which they fear to lose, and which they think they will not find in God Himself. In order that such souls may come to pure love they must be forced, and, as it were, driven into perfect conformity to God by means of aridity and desolation.

Yet if the soul would help herself, let her consider some of the exhortations of the Fathers which may move her. *He loveth thee, O Lord, less than is befitting who loveth anything but Thee; that he loveth not for Thee,*[1] says S. Augustine. This pure love is also commanded us in the Gospel, where God would have us love Him with our whole soul, with all our power, commenting upon which S. Gregory says: *It is diligently noted that the divine*

[1] S. Aug. Confess. l.x. c.xxix. P.L. xxxii. col. 796, and Lib. Solil. Animae, c.xix. P.L. xl, col. 880.

word when it commands God to be loved does not only teach us with what love, but with what measure we must love Him.[1]

But what should move us most of all is the thought of that pure love through which God gave His Son to us, of which it is written *God so loved the world that He gave his only Son ;*[2] and that pure and great love of God the Son who suffered such great and grievous torments and so ignominious and painful a death for us. *For no man hath greater charity than to give his life for his friends,*[3] and again He tells us that His love for us is such as His heavenly Father bears to Him, *As my Father loved me so I love you ;*[4] and what greater purity of love can there be than there is between the heavenly Father and His Son ?

[1] S. Greg. Mor. l.x, c.vi, P.L. lxxv, col. 923.
[2] John iii, 16.
[3] John xv, 13.
[4] John xv. 9.

Chapter the Fourteenth

That we must take God in an interior naked Faith: with signs how to know it.

The soul which is now freed from all creatures, herself, and also from God's gifts, may rest and live in *something*. It is incredible how craftily and subtly nature seeks herself, and to what she will attach herself before she learns to die to herself. This last point of which we now treat is rightly known by only very few, for the greater number who have advanced thus far in abnegation still rest in a subtle image which nature frames of God, and so come not to that *death* and *nothing* after which they can be raised above themselves to God. For all images, however noble and subtle they may be, hinder the soul at this stage by holding her wholly in herself, and, as we have said, she cannot be partly in and partly above herself, half dead and half alive. Wherefore S. Bonaventure well said that all images are *impediments* to the soul which is to be united to God, and He terms them *spots*, and blemishes, admonishing the soul that the eye of her understanding must be wholly blinded, and that she must content herself with naked

faith, which takes God divinely as He is in Himself.

There is nothing more excellent and profitable than for the soul to accustom herself to walk in this true faith, continually moving and stirring up herself to God through the same, for unless she come to this she will never attain to any sublime exercise. Hence it is that S. Chrysostom says that *without faith none can receive any knowledge of high matters,*[1] and such as follow their own judgment and reason suffer shipwreck before they come to know the truth, as has happened to very many. For although the soul be detached from all exterior things and converted into herself, nevertheless she is unable to hold the divine light which she has begun to observe in herself unless she take God in naked faith as He is, according to His divine essence, infinite, incomprehensible and insensible, and not in some image, light, gift, or feeling, even though she may not cling to such. For the divine light which she has gained by those former pure acts must perish through such natural working of the powers of the soul, since it is far above all natural working. Hence great care must be taken, for this is the most hidden defect which the soul can have in her.

The reason why she does not take God in naked faith is because this is troublesome to her. She has always been accustomed to have something certain whereon to rest, and which she holds as the prop

[1] S. Chrys. Homil. lxiii in Gen. Migne, T. iv. col. 546-7; also Epist. ad Rom. Homil. viii, T. ix, col. 460 and *passim*.

of her exercises; hence she finds it difficult to leave her former certainty and hold herself contented with a naked, unknown God. Moreover, the powers always desire to have their objects, and therefore very few are free from this defect, although they think they are; their images are so subtle that they cannot believe that they are images, and indeed it is scarcely possible to convince them until such time as they have become denuded of such. Nature purposely frames these secret images of God in order not to come to that naked faith which is so repugnant to her, yet, be the image never so subtle and noble, the soul thus remains in herself, and cannot be elevated above herself, to behold the infinity of God's presence. Let the soul, therefore, carefully examine herself upon this point.

First if, in her introversion, the soul seek God with suspicion, fearing lest she will not find Him so soon and so well as she desires, it is a sign that she does not stand in naked faith; for that would teach her that she cannot miss God since He is always present, and that, as soon as, for His sake, she denies herself and all things, without doubt He is immediately in her. Secondly, if she grows weary; for that is a sure sign that she apprehends God in a certain place and after a form that presents itself to her when she has Him not actually, or that she can express in words or frame for herself. Also if she retain God with a certain effort and forcing of her powers, which after some time becomes wearisome, it is a certain sign that she apprehends Him with her

powers and not in spirit. But the surest sign that a soul does not hold God in naked faith is if she be fickle and inconstant in her exercise to Him, sometimes thinking her prayer to be right, sometimes wrong; altering her manner of prayer sometimes in one way, sometimes in another. All this inconstancy comes from the sense, for faith is unchangeable truth.

These signs may suffice to show the soul whether or no she is united to God in this naked faith, but if she would be still more assured, let her consider whether in her prayer she lose all sense of time and place, for such are quite forsaken when God is apprehended as present in this manner. Yet in examining herself, let the soul be very simple, otherwise she may produce a new image, whereas perhaps before she was working purely by faith; and although this matter be so subtle, notwithstanding the soul, which has once learned by experience what it is to be thus united to God in naked faith, finds a great difference between that manner and any use of images, however subtle these may be.

The cause of the soul's inability thus to work comes from self-love and a want of practice, in that she does not sufficiently confide in God or cast herself wholly upon Him. For the soul that is living by naked faith bids farewell to all working of her own powers, and gives up herself wholly, plunging herself, as it were, into a hidden abyss, without any thought as to what will become of her. This is the death of the lower nature, and it penetrates to the very

marrow of her being; therefore such a soul deserves to be received of God, and to rest in Him in a security which she could never have obtained by any forces of her own.

Now he who is defective in this faith is indeed elevated above all creatures in his conversion to God, but he is not raised above himself, and hence is never wholly freed from his own image. Yet he does not perceive it so palpably as the man who seeks sensible consolation in God or rests in the gifts of God; also such an one receives more light from above, because he is turned away from himself, though not yet above himself. This man stands upon the utmost bounds of nature, not daring to venture any farther; he has God for his object, but not essentially and, therefore, he is never fully contented, not finding much progress in himself, and often troubled according as his natural certainty is stronger or weaker.

Like a bird which has been kept in captivity and so, when freed, fears to commit itself to the air for fear of falling, so is this soul. She has withdrawn herself from the gifts of God, she would gladly lift herself up to Him in pure love, but she is held back by a vain fear, and rests upon the sensible certainty in which she has lived. She fears to trust herself to God in naked faith doubting how it might succeed with her, and therefore she remains in poverty, continually dissatisfied in herself, and making no progress until she begins to embolden herself to relinquish her own working, by which she makes

God present to her, and by acts of faith to accustom herself to cling to the essential presence of God within her.

And then she finds that, in leaving herself wholly for God, she is presently received of God, and far more certain and satisfied in Him than ever she was before, either in herself or in other creatures. The vain fear which possessed her daily decreases, and day by day her confidence in God increases, so that little by little she resigns herself more perfectly and simply, without suspicion of fear, until at length she is wholly separated from self and perfectly rendered over to God. Then she learns *ipso facto* how wrongly she sought God before, and feels that she must no more seek for Him than for the air wherein she lives, for she has never been without Him, any more than she was without the air. Also she perceives that of the essential presence of God we can retain no memory or certainty except when we actually enjoy it, and that this gives perfect rest and content to the soul, which remains, above all change, confirmed and fixed in the supreme Good, which is present to her at all times and places above all working of her powers and senses. So at this point the soul must be taught more by her own experience than by reason; when she finds herself not fully satisfied, and does not perceive any notable progress, she retains her interior image but without clinging to it, and so gradually she comes to the naked faith. The soul must obtain the last two essentials (pure love and naked faith) rather by con-

tinual practice than by force of reason, for they are wholly contrary to man's corrupt nature. Hence she must not be amazed or dejected when she perceives little progress in these, since she must gain them rather by divine interior light than by her own efforts.

Nevertheless, to help the devout soul as much as possible, we remind her that she must never doubt of God's presence, nor seek after it with anxiety, any more than she would search for the air, and if she will unify all her powers and stoutly exclude all human reasons and natural certainty by degrees she will come to this most noble exercise of naked faith. To this end it will help her much if she remember that the Apostles themselves were to be deprived of the most excellent and grateful humanity of Christ before they could receive the Holy Ghost, our Saviour telling them plainly: *Unless I go away the Holy Ghost will not come to you.*[1] And truly there is no image so sublime and excellent but nature secretly rests therein, as she will perceive when she has actually attained to the state of naked faith, and through it has been elevated in God. Then she sees plainly that she seeks herself too much in all images, however subtle they may be, and it is an absolute mortification, even a perfect death so, without all certainty, to be resigned over to God. Let her comfort and encourage herself with the words of S. Chrysostom: *There is nothing worse than to subject spiritual things*

[1] S. John xvi, 7.

to human reason,[1] *which hindereth man that he cannot behold great and profound matters. Therefore are we called fideles (faithful), because by subjecting the subtlety of human reason we should ascend to the sublimity of faith.*[2] And truly this faith is absolutely a going forth from one's self, so that the soul deserves to be raised to the contemplation of God by this rather than by any of the former exercises. Because for God she willingly forsakes all natural certainty she deserves to be rewarded with a supernatural gift by Him who repays a hundredfold all abnegation. Therefore, let the devout soul incite herself to this faith and willingly forsake her own certainty, knowing that the darker it is the nobler is its essence, being *a substance of things to be hoped for, the argument of things not appearing.*[3]

Here you now have the sense of the four points in which we say Perfection consists. We must add that the soul exercising herself therein must firmly believe that God is present within her, and that all her works must be directed to this presence. For thereby there is allayed all that longing of the soul which would otherwise arise in her, disquieting her and driving her in the wrong direction, for it is

[1] S. Chrys. Expos. in Psal. cxv. Migne iv, col, 323. In Epist. ad Rom. Hom. I. Migne viii, col. 398 (the quotation is, as usual, elaborated by the author).

[2] S. Chrys. Homil. iv. in Epist. II ad Tim. Migne x, col. 618-19, also Expos. in Ps. cxv. Migne iv, col 321.

[3] Heb. xi, 1.

proper to love that, as long as it is not united with its object, it causes a longing in the soul towards the thing beloved, which would disturb her inward peace and consequently hinder her union with God. Again, if the soul were to apprehend God otherwise than interiorly it could only be by continual operation tending outwards; and, as it is impossible for any working of the powers of the soul to be continual, consequently the soul is often deprived of this presence of God. And even if she could hold God continually in this manner no union would ever result therefrom, because this continual operation of the soul would force her to remain always in herself.

We must also be beware of understanding this in too crude a manner, such as by imagining that God is in us as we are in a place; for God is above all place, and therefore not to be found in any certain place by observation and reflexion. Therefore by the aforesaid act of faith the soul simply apprehends that the incomprehensible and unknown God is as intimately present within her as she is to herself; that by His inward presence she has her being, and remains what she is. Hence she must not turn from herself in order to turn to God, as though she were without and He within, but only procure in herself a perfect peace and rest of heart, knowing that she is in God and God in her. Then, standing in this interior peace, let her recollect all her powers within herself, not that God is more there than elsewhere, but that thereby she is the better preserved

from distractions and wandering. Thus must the soul take the interior presence of God that it may appease all desires, longings and achieve conversion to God through a firm faith that He and she are most intimately present one to the other.

Chapter the Fifteenth

That none can find God truly who have not followed this way to the very end.

The soul which would truly find God and obtain His kingdom within her must have obtained all the four essentials of Perfection which we have named; for absolute abnegation, perfect resignation, pure love and naked faith separate man from all things created and from himself, placing him in an interior nakedness and vast unimaginable solitude. By abnegation the soul forsakes all images and attachments to outward things, which is, as it were, a setting out upon her voyage; by resignation she takes ship, for she enters into herself, and yet is loosed from herself. Love is the divine floodtide which carries her from the shore, for thereby there flows into her a divine light and a relish for spiritual things by which she begins to be raised above herself unto God; and finally naked faith establishes her, separates the spirit and raises it above the senses, and is the full sail under which the soul puts to sea, courageously bidding farewell to all natural certainty, and casting herself wholly upon God. Thus, so far as attachment to creatures and to herself is concerned,

the soul is dead and is ready to be raised to God above herself. Not only beginners, but also those who have entered upon the way of Perfection, may examine themselves with respect to these points, for in the practice thereof lies the only way to God in which all other ways must end. And the soul seeking God must firmly believe that she shall never find Him rightly so long as she is deficient in any one of the four, though (as we have said) she is less estranged from God through want of the last than of the first, since she is capable of the divine presence in some degree, and may thereby be prepared for the perfect obtaining of pure love and naked faith.

Those who are yet very natural must stir up their souls by means of meditations and other exercises, using such considerations as may best move them, and particularly praying earnestly to God to assist them to become dead and annihilated to what is purely natural, that so He alone may live and reign in them. Nor must they run over these virtues lightly (to which nature is too much inclined and so deceives many) but they must thoroughly and faithfully exercise themselves first in one, then in another. It is in order that they may be the better understood that we have separated them, but the first is comprehended in the last: he who has pure love undoubtedly has abnegation and resignation, which precede pure love, and are much less perfect; likewise naked faith cannot rightly exist in the soul, but pure love must be there also, and consequently resignation and abnegation.

Nor is it necessary that the soul observe the order here set down, but let her strive to enkindle in herself pure love whereby she may more easily obtain the others; but by them she may judge of her love, and at the end of her meditation she should examine herself upon these heads. But chiefly must she examine whether she have in herself those signs we have enumerated and, if so, she must endeavour, with all possible simplicity, to keep herself in this state, allowing her heart to be enlarged in the interior light she perceives, so that she may be carried out of all created things and herself into God.

Other souls, who practise resignation and walk in faith yet make no real progress, should examine themselves upon the other points, and they will easily see wherein consist their defects. For they must not believe that they have the right interior dispositions, seeing that if they had they would also have the interior illumination, and would advance towards God. Herein we easily deceive ourselves, and things are impediments to the divine union which we know not, and if we knew would be ready to amend. No man can be without fault who does not find God present in his soul; for if he believed himself to blame for this privation he would set himself to search out the cause thereof and, soon finding it, he would amend it by God's grace. For the defect is that either he cannot rest quiet by himself, which is a sign that there is something wanting in his perfect abnegation of creatures; or when alone he cannot turn in to himself or can only recollect

himself by force or violence, which shows that he is not yet sufficiently detached from himself, and resigned to God; or, when recollected, he perceives nothing which is divine but only himself, which should show him that he does not yet love God purely enough. Or lastly, even if he perceives the divine light within himself, he cannot retain it, and it passes swiftly away, which is a sign that he does not take God in naked faith.

Thus each one comes to the knowledge of his defects, wherefore he who does not use sufficient diligence deprives himself of God through his own fault. And these souls should reflect that they have almost come to God yet cannot rightly find or hold Him, therefore it is better that they should exercise themselves actively in these virtues than stand vacantly, since they have not yet the necessary preparation for attaining to God. If they remain idle they will never come to know their defects, much less overcome them whilst, if they work, they are losing no time but making themselves more apt for union with God.

But such men are difficult to persuade of this, for usually they have such an aversion from activity and multiplicity, and so love uniformity and passivity, that they cannot be drawn therefrom. How often this is not because they are so simplified in spirit, but because they are attracted by the *natural rest* of such a state, and persuade themselves that the least working would hinder it. They hear spiritual writers advise the soul to reject all active working,

yet their very fear of losing their recollection thus should warn them that they are lacking in these essentials. For it is no work of the imagination or understanding which is required but only one of freewill, which does not carry itself actively to God, but simply averts itself from all that is not God, placing the soul in that purity which is the immediate preparation for union with God. Nor can this do harm to anyone, but will help on the soul which has not yet come to God, and will fix and enlighten that soul which has already attained to Him in some measure. Such souls will do wisely, therefore, if they exercise themselves in this necessary preparation, but after a simple and uniform manner which we shall declare in the next chapter.

Chapter the Sixteenth

A short and simple manner for the Soul to exercise in herself that which has been said.

Let us now set forth a short interior exercise for the help of the soul which is seeking God, through which, having now obtained the right disposition of her free will, she may go forward and come to God. But be it noted that none should leave off the use of meditation until he has brought his free will to that state, in which it willingly yields itself to do or omit all that God requires of him or may impose upon him. And even when this has been attained, it is not easily possible for the soul to reach soon the perfection included in the four points we have laid down; and even though the soul may think that she is free to fly to God, having passed over all obstacles, she will not perceive God so easily and fully as we have promised her, for she is not, as yet, where she must be. She can indeed, and must, detach herself from all creatures and resign herself to God, but she cannot be raised above herself to God by any effort of her own, as we have said.

For this she needs to be helped by God, and as yet she is not ready for this help, since, though she

has obtained these four points, there is too much of her own activity in her, and she is still not dead to herself. Wherefore she must first obtain them essentially in her, so that she is as perfectly detached from all creatures and herself and, with respect to her interior powers, as recollected and absorbed in God as though all creatures and herself were annihilated. Until then she cannot be elevated above herself, but then, standing in pure love and naked faith, she must expect the divine assistance. But there is still some preparation needed for this, and because many men do not reflect upon it they never come to the true enjoying of God, nor know how to speak of any constant interior intercourse with Him. For sometimes we find good, devout souls who have that detachment from creatures which is necessary, and who are interiorly rightly disposed towards God, who yet do not go forward but let their good preparation remain idle. This is lamentable, for they foolishly neglect an unspeakable good, the more so since they have covered most of the way; often they even betake themselves indiscreetly to external works (though out of a good intention) and so gradually fall back and lose ground. Therefore, having come so far and begun to obtain this interior good disposition, the devout soul shall believe that she has in her hand the key of heaven, and shall thenceforward behave herself as we shall teach her; thus she will attain perfectly the dispositions necessary, and easily find the door of the kingdom of Heaven which lies hidden within her. Also she will learn

how to enter into it, to go forward and furthermore to remain, rest, and live in God.

First of all let her return to our old comparison of the air and realise how the body is compassed about by the air, which it neither sees nor feels, yet enjoys at all times without labour, living, moving, working in it. Now the soul must believe that God is a hidden, most noble essence, incomparably more remote than is the air from all sense and feeling; that He is more inwardly present to her than is the sunlight to the air or the soul to the body; for He is the origin by whose presence both she, her body, the air, light and all things subsist. She shall reflect further, that she was created to enjoy this presence, and that, once she is perfectly dead to herself, this will be as easy to her as it is for the body to enjoy the air. There is this difference, however, that the body always enjoys the air even when man does not think about it or know of it, as during sleep; but the soul can enjoy the divine essence only by actual knowledge and love, and must turn herself thereto although she neither sees nor perceives God. Nevertheless, this conversion must not be a laborious and anxious seeking of God, but with perfect certainty, without any anxiety or crude active working, for she can no more lose God than her body can lose the air.

And the soul must firmly believe that when she is detached from everything created, and subjects herself to that divine and unknown essence, that then she is *sine medio*, without any intermediary, in

God, even although by reason of her unfamiliarity she does not preceive Him in any extraordinary or peculiar manner. For she cannot convert herself out of Him, but may turn herself from Him, and hinder herself from enjoying Him or perceiving Him, and this hindrance she removes when she is detached from every creature and wholly, out of pure love, given up to God. This she must propose to herself at the beginning of her prayer with a lively and firm faith, and it must be a stay for her whole exercise.

Having through this faith recollected all her powers, she must enkindle in herself a great reverence and love to that eternal good which—although hidden—is so intimately present to her, and a great desire to enjoy it and rest therein, as in her origin and blessed end out of which she neither must nor can expect any happiness either in time or in eternity. Having obtained this reverence and love she shall then, most simply yet absolutely, renounce all things that are not God, being content neither to see, know, feel or taste any of them for all eternity should God so will, and caring not though all should turn to nothing; and this she must do without forming any image at all of them. This she must mean from the bottom of her heart and, in the same simple manner, she shall desire to be also, as it were, annihilated, and to lose her created being in that divine essence which alone truly *is*. Just as the body is governed by the soul, so should she desire to be governed by God, suffering and bearing,

without contradiction or choice, whatever He may lay or suffer to fall upon her in time and in eternity. And she should so desire for no other reason but because God only *is*, and is her only end, and all things ought to be directed and levelled to His good pleasure.

Now if the soul does this simply and with lively faith, she will perceive that she is falling into a forgetfulness of all exterior things and of herself, so that her imagination ceases to trouble her, and it is as if all these things were annihilated. If she had already reached this detachment she will now be more fixed therein, and will find that her mind is emptied and free, yet that there is in it something divine to which she feels herself lovingly drawn and invited. Having her mind thus introverted, the soul must open wide all her interior to give place to this infinite God so inwardly there present; I say *open* rather than *convert*, for as yet she is not fit to make any conversion or introversion such as it ought to be, for she must first be annihilated in herself before she can convert herself to God as she ought. Therefore, let her simply allow this mind to arise in her, and give place to the eternal brightness which she begins to perceive, remembering that God is a light which must enkindle Himself in her, and a gift which must give itself. He will manifest Himself in the mind, which has hitherto been altogether inclined to the senses, and therefore was not capable of receiving this divine light; wherefore it must now be raised up and wholly purified

like the clear and pure air, that it may without obstacle receive that light and enjoy God's hidden presence. By her practice of the four dispositions we have mentioned she has removed all hindrances, so that she is now capable of perfecting her spiritual capacity by interior working, and this she must make her only exercise. In order to do this the better let her first apprehend God, not as in her but she in Him, like as the body is in the air; that He is to penetrate, illumine and replenish her as the sunlight does the air, and that her immortification and want of resignation hinder the light of God as a thick, dark cloud hinders the sunlight. So shall she keep herself recollected in this divine solitude with great simplicity, persevering in her aversion from creatures and resignation of herself to God. And in order to persevere therein the better, the soul should endeavour to feed and retain that spiritual joy which arises within her after the resignation of herself, without which she should scarcely ever be found; for the dispositions of abnegation and resignation remove all hindrances before God, whose nearness must always produce a spiritual joy within the soul. Yet this she must do so simply that she does not lose or obscure the interior peace and light within her, thinking of this peace as welling up in her rather than as stirred up on her part. Even if, through the weakening of her faith and love, this spiritual joy and spiritual elevation were lost, the soul should not try to stir it up by activity of her own powers, but should keep herself in the

interior peace and solitude of heart which she has obtained by the practice of these four virtues. This she will be able to do if she observe herself narrowly, and yield no place to the disturbing thoughts which arise, keeping herself in the state of detachment and resignation. And though this be done very simply and inwardly, yet it requires great energy, and although the soul is not converted to any intellectual object, she is not idle but busy with the *will*, and that very profitably. Thereby she is more stripped of all created things, gradually more simplified in herself and constituted in perfect peace, so that she begins to perceive that hidden, divine light within her, and will presently begin to raise herself simply towards it. So by degrees the spirit separates itself from the senses, which must of necessity take place before the soul can come immediately to God; and this separation can be brought about in no other way than by keeping one's self perfectly detached from forms of creatures interiorly, and ceasing from all active working, excepting what is required in order to retain this simple, uniform mind, of which we shall treat presently.

For the man whom we here describe is as water which is mingled with earth, so that being dark it cannot receive into itself the sun's rays. It can be cleared only by standing still, so that the earth may sink to the bottom and the clear water remain above, when the sunbeams can penetrate it, and we may see to the bottom. Thus it is that man stands in this present degree; he has detached himself from

creatures and resigned himself to God, but in himself he is still obscure, for his spirit is still mingled with nature and senses, which darken it and deprive him of the interior light and enjoying of the divine presence. And from this obscurity he cannot be freed but by interior peace and quietness, in which holy rest the nature and senses (already separated, and not mingled as in the case of unspiritual men) sink down of themselves while the spirit ascends to its own proper place and, being naturally clear, is apt to receive the divine light.

Therefore all interior working which does not discreetly serve to preserve this peace must be rejected by the soul. Nevertheless, in the beginning she will suffer a great conflict, since the senses and lower powers will not permit themselves to be thus made captive by faith, but will strive to bring before her images and similitudes of God, or to make her know and feel Him after their crude manner, thus often disturbing her inward peace and solitude. But she must bear and suffer this patiently without being disturbed, persuading herself that it cannot be otherwise in the beginning, and endeavouring to persevere in peace, resuming it as often as she finds that she has been drawn out of it.

And, in case she cannot quiet her rebellious senses, let her gently remind herself how God is infinitely above all natural powers and forces, and that the more she endeavours to know or feel Him the farther she strays from Him. She must simply

let go all activity of her own, just as one who stood in a great darkness would not trouble to try to see what is about him (knowing it would be but lost labour), but would rather await the light in patience. So must the soul likewise suppress all uprising and working of both the understanding and the will, keeping them in as perfect peace as though she already beheld and enjoyed God as she desires, knowing that He is as near to her as she is to herself, that she must not make Him present, but that He must make Himself present unto her. This He will not do until she has ceased from all striving and choosing of her own, and is wholly content to enjoy Him at such time and after such manner as pleases Him; nay more, after she has resigned herself to His will though He should always hide Himself from her.

And she will suffer no less from the wandering of her senses and in resisting their inclinations to creatures, which will often trouble her with images, disturb her and turn her from God. Here, again, she must oppose herself with great simplicity, not fighting against the images, thoughts or commotions, but escaping them as well as she can by neglecting them, and returning quietly to herself. She will be helped in this if she remember that she has within her the origin of all whatsoever she would seek or desire without, which she can enjoy more perfectly within her than without.

But besides these combats she will perceive another within her; for she will sometimes feel a sorrow

because it seems to her that she is wholly idle, when (as will happen now and then) she does not perceive any particular light or affection, nor the joy and unity of which we have spoken. This happens especially before the soul is experienced in this interior prayer, but she must not give ear to it, but diligently resist all distractions and try to remain by herself. For it is labour enough to keep all her powers quiet and to keep recollected within what is continually running out; for our understanding and other faculties, like a mill, are always turning and working and, as flowing water, are always running outwards.

And it is not to be expected that, even after the former abnegation and resignation, the soul is at once free from all interior attachment, even though she cannot actually find it out in herself; for it is very secret and hidden, and since she is new to these ways she may well have it unknowingly. However, providing she keeps herself interiorly recollected as well as she can, intending to please God and courageously resisting all images and distractions, she can lose no time although she may not have any sense of the presence of God. But it may be that the soul finds that not only is she unable to work interiorly, but is sunk down in herself in darkness and dryness, oppressed by distractions and uprising passions, and feeling that she has scarcely strength to resist them, but is finding abnegation, resignation and even pure love only tedious and irksome. When she finds herself thus fallen let her renew the acts set down at the beginning of this exercise, but as

simply as she possibly can, beginning from her faith in God's presence within her. If the tepidity proceed from the manifold distractions, she shall chiefly renew her detachment from all created things; but if it come merely through lack of fervour, she must hold herself most of all in perfect resignation, and endeavour to stir up within her the aforesaid spiritual joy, or at least the spiritual peace and solitude of her heart, and that chiefly when she finds this inner solitariness irksome. She must also strive to retain longer in her this formless interior peace of heart when she perceives it, for therein lies all her progress; the more quickly she can come to this, and the longer she can continue in it, the more is she prepared in the next degree to find and enjoy God without *medium* or mean.

And in case the soul find (as often happens in the beginning) that some particular bodily attitude or action helps her, such as opening or closing her eyes, or composing herself after some particular manner, let her use such when she conveniently can; for the soul, which is beginning to detach herself from creatures and lift herself up to God, is often helped in her weakness by some small exterior means. But as far as she can she must try to dive into herself and, as it were, to sink down into the hidden presence of God; and because much depends upon the working of the soul in this state (which is the necessary preparation for what is to follow) let us describe it still more clearly, that the soul may know the better what she is doing, and

may be secured against that false rest of which she may here seem to stand in some danger.

The proper working of the soul in this present exercise is to purify her mind more and more perfectly, for it is already in some degree stripped of creatures and detached from the senses, and this purified mind is the only instrument with which she is to work in the future. And although it must be done so simply that the soul is commonly said to be merely passive, yet if we rightly consider it we shall find that the soul performs divers operations which are very laborious although quiet.

There is first a constant perseverance in the interior dispositions already produced, for she must retain them by the same means as she obtained them; so that the dispositions of abnegation, resignation, pure love and naked faith are here constantly exercised, though simply by an inward conversion. Secondly, through faith, and through a simple apprehension of her resignation and detachment out of pure love of God, the soul often renews the knowledge of His presence within her. Thirdly, she is continually keeping under not only the fantasy but also the interior will which, through their crudeness, always trouble the enjoyment of the inner divine light. Besides this she diligently holds the understanding captive in the obscurity of faith. All this is very laborious, the more so as the soul is still inexperienced and unstable, and all her labour consists in putting away the hindrances and retaining the inward light, which she perceives to be so subtle

as to vanish through the least negligence, although at this stage it is her one stay and source of strength.

At this stage the soul resembles a man who is standing upon the bank of a running stream, at the bottom of which he sees a precious coin, but because the water is troubled and full of floating leaves he cannot seize the coin, so is obliged to content himself with watching the place where he knows it is until, when the water is cleared, he may see the coin clearly and take it. Thus, in a manner, it is with the soul; at present she is troubled, disturbed and darkened, but she has already perceived a divine beam or spark, and although she is often hindered from the sight and enjoyment of this precious and hidden good, yet she remains turned thither, awaiting the greater light or clearness which will enable her to behold and possess it. Yet she is by no means idle, for not only does she turn her sight and interiorly aim at the hidden spark, but she continually endeavours to quiet and clear the muddy water. But no comparison can so clearly express this interior labour as the devout and faithful soul experiences it in herself. For in this precious peace she places all her happiness, temporal and eternal; for it she has already given all she is, has, or can, neither knowing nor desiring any other good besides it. So although a soul, which is not well prepared by the exercises we have shown, may often be in danger of remaining in a false interior rest, when she places herself in this simple thought because, being yet very natural and ruled by the

senses, she easily falls into natural idleness and stays therein. Such is not the case with that soul of which we speak. She may fall from her interior recollection, but there is no fear that she will rest in her senses, of which she has a horror.

Chapter the Seventeenth

Certain hindrances here met by the Soul and how she shall behave herself against them.

We have begun to show the devout soul what she is seeking; she has come from all created things without her into herself, and has now somewhat penetrated through herself and begun to discover within her the hidden noble power by which she must be elevated in God. She now perceives the suburbs of eternity, and discovers the port of heaven, and approaches the kingdom of God within her. But although she sees the way open she knows not how to go forward and enter therein, because she must do so in a manner quite other from any she has imagined or experienced. She seems to have no firm foothold, no anything by which to hold on; she perceives some *divine thing* within her, which sometimes passes suddenly through her like lightning, but again hides itself as soon as she is aware of it, so that she knows neither what has become of it nor how to obtain it again. Yet notwithstanding here is the proper place of the spirit, and through it ought the soul to enter into this divine unity, stand firm and rest; all the labour and difficulty which

the soul has in holding herself there comes by reason of the impediments caused by her powers and senses.

At first her difficulty was to separate her powers from all external creatures, keep them from wandering, and afterwards from all images which, of themselves, they vainly framed of God. Now that she has in some sort conquered these hindrances these same powers cast before her another, no less serious. As the soul begins to approach to the Divine presence, and to perceive in herself the enlightening of which we have spoken, the fantasy forms divers shapes and images thereof, the understanding sets itself to comprehend it, and the lower powers to taste and feel it; hence the soul is anew hindered, so that she cannot enjoy the influx of the divine light nor raise herself up by it to God. For this activity dissipates her interior peace, impairs the light, and alienates her from God, which torments her so much the more as she can see no way of escape. The wandering of her senses she could overcome by detachment and resignation, so that her affections were turned away from all creatures; the distraction caused by crude activity and conceived images she met by the exercise of pure faith, by which she convinced her understanding that God was incomprehensible and unimaginable. But here no acts or purposes have any place, but rather hinder by disturbing the interior peace which she has gained by great labour. The only remedy is for the soul to hear and wait with patience; for not for all the reasons we have alleged, or for any others, will the

senses leave off turning themselves to what the soul perceives in her, until such time as they feel by experience that they hinder the soul, and become the more estranged from God the more they seek to convert themselves to the divine object perceived in the soul. Again they are too much accustomed to busy themselves with what passes in the soul, since usually she receives no knowledge of anything but by them.

The best means whereby the soul can free herself from the trouble of the senses and natural powers is by exercising herself more and more in interior prayer to God, albeit she may do so with many obstacles and small satisfactions. Hereby these senses will be convinced, little by little, that they have nothing to do in these divine gifts, and only hinder by meddling therein; and so of themselves they will stay behind and cease from troubling her. And in order that the soul may the better understand what we have said, as also what we intend to say, and thereby perhaps partly escape this damage and the sooner promote the spirit to the contemplation of God above all hindrances of the powers and senses, we will again make use of a simple parable. The soul must know that the manifestation of the divine presence in her is commonly called by spiritual teachers an *illumination*, on account of its close analogy to the infusion of light; by this light the soul is prepared and elevated to the contemplation of God, and, hence, such as have this presence are called illuminated men. Now let us consider what

we see to happen daily in the case of the light of the sun and our bodily eyes. For the sunlight is not received and enjoyed wholly passively, but some previous preparation and aptness is also necessary, as also the operation of the sensitive power which turns itself to the light and beholds it. In like manner, having been purified by the former exercise, the spirit is made fit to receive into it the divine light with which, by a very interior operation, it converts itself to that divine *essence* and enjoys, beholds and acknowledges it. The material sun sends forth its beams into all parts of the earth, and communicates its light to all, without exception of persons or places or anything else, when it is not impeded; yet that light is not enjoyed by any other thing in the world except by the eye, which has in it a capacity by which it receives and enjoys the light, and a power by means of which it beholds it without labour or difficulty, as also all other things in it unless it be hindered by some exterior impediment or interior disease. In like manner the divine essence, which is *a light in which is no darkness*[1] sends forth His light into all places, and to all created things, not only on earth but also in heaven, penetrating all things with His splendour, and by His interior presence conserving them in their being. But this light can be known by no creature excepting the angels and man, who is capable of so knowing it, not by his bodily or intellectual eye, but by another certain secret eye, namely the spirit, which, by its purity

[1] 1 John i, 5.

and simplicity, is alone capable of apprehending God. It is the eye of the soul, created to behold and enjoy God, as the bodily eye to behold the sunlight, and receiving within itself a light from him whereby it sees all external things as being united to God; of which we shall speak hereafter. Yet although in this hidden light of the divinity there is no darkness (seeing that it is itself of exceeding splendour), to all created intellects it is an unspeakable obscurity, by reason of its nobility and purity which no natural understanding can behold, so that the soul after being separated from the body must be informed by a special light in order to be elevated thereunto. And although in this life our souls have an inbred and natural inclination to enjoy and behold God (which is the end for which we were created), yet in order to be raised to Him, and behold Him in such a manner as He may be beheld in this life, the soul has need of another light. And although this knowledge be obscure, whereas that of the other life is clear, yet because this obscure knowledge is without *medium* the soul has much more need of help for it, since to remain for any time naked, so far as her ordinary powers are concerned, is wholly contrary to her nature. Therefore those natural powers must be suspended from working by a higher power, and the soul must from above be instructed in pure love and naked faith.

Now the soul obtains such a power and light through the former exercise when she has practised it sincerely, and obtained in herself at least the first

two of the dispositions we have described. She is recollected, and in interior peace, and has ceased from all crude working of the natural powers, so that she sees her natural purity and insight like a shining crystal which, once befouled, is now cleansed. Then there arises at once that divine light within which is a recompense for all this preparation; for once the soul has abandoned all created things purely for God's sake, has resigned herself to Him and has annihilated self, God cannot but correspond, bestowing upon her the hundredfold which He has promised in this life to such as forsake and renounce anything for His name. Now this cannot refer to any temporal reward, for the soul has renounced all such for God's sake; it must needs be something heavenly and divine, and such wherein the soul may be at rest and live according to all her powers, as she did before in creatures and herself, for these she has forsaken and denied for God. This reward is a most noble light which satisfies her a hundredfold more than all she possessed before, and in it she may rest and live after a heavenly and divine manner, being as it were out of the world and her own self. And this further prepares her to enjoy and behold the divinity, and afterwards to rest and live therein after a much more perfect manner, making her perfectly pure and simple, strengthening her in pure love and naked faith, and so perfecting in her what she had begun according to her ability but could not accomplish alone. By reason of this light the soul remains recollected in a way not

possible by her own unaided efforts, and learns by experience with what purity and simplicity she must convert herself to God. This light remains in the soul so long as she preserves herself in perfect detachment and abstains from her own working, but as soon as she yields place to creatures, or fails in the other condition, at once she expels that divine light.

It is this light which the soul having come thus far begins to perceive in herself, and not the divine *presence* of which we shall speak hereafter, and (as we have said) the soul expels it by the working of those powers and senses which will turn themselves to it as soon as it manifests itself in the soul; for we cannot turn ourselves to it by our own working, or behold it with observation, since it arises in us of itself, wholly purifying and overflowing through the soul, or piercing her so that she possesses it more nearly than if she turned herself to it. Neither the intellect nor the senses can conceive or understand anything thereof, on account of its great sublimity and simplicity, but only disturb the peace and silence of the soul by their activity, and deprive her of that interior clearness in which the light must be received and retained. For in order to receive this light nothing is required but an aptness in the soul, such as there is in the eyes to enjoy the natural light, and this aptness or capacity such a soul, as we are now considering, has gained. Beyond this any further activity is superfluous and even detrimental, for this light must enter in of itself and not only

cannot be gained or retained by any operation of the soul, but such operation will only impede or even expel it altogether; for it is utterly above the natural apprehension of the powers and senses, which can no more feel or hold it than the hands can feel or hold the sunlight.

All that the understanding and other powers can do is to take away the impediments, and this is the work of meditation and all other active exercises, which detach the will from creatures and stir up the soul to the pure love of God, which purifies her and prepares her to receive this heavenly light. In the right understanding of this truth lie the best means of repressing the rebellious powers and senses, so that they remain quiet and allow the soul to receive in a passive manner the light which quietly arises in her. Moreover, although it is difficult to prevent the lower powers from forming images of God yet, as soon as she is aware of the rising of this light in her, the soul must utterly forsake all such images. And if she find that the senses remain rebellious, and that she seems to gain no benefit, yet she must not lose courage nor be troubled, but willingly and quietly endure the conflict within her, knowing that God will not account it a fault but will turn it to her greater merit. And let her be persuaded that, persevering thus faithfully, she will in the end gain the perfect victory over these domestic enemies, though it will be little by little and she may not perceive it. Progress in the interior life is like to the growing of a tree which grows in size and strength

imperceptibly; and the tree which takes the longer time to grow remains green for a longer time than the tree which grows more quickly. In the same manner the spirit advances through this constant exercise in Perfection, becoming more and more elevated above her senses, more simplified and more fixed in God, though all this is imperceptible; and he who, not through his own fault, but by reason of his rebellious senses, has come to this most slowly, afterwards beholds God more clearly and continues the longer in this noble contemplation.

Chapter the Eighteenth

Herein is taught how the divine light begins to shine, and at last is perfectly received by the Soul.

The more the lower powers and senses hold themselves vacant and quiet, the purer and clearer does the soul become, and the divine light infuses itself more clearly and abundantly; for it does not wholly irradiate the soul all at once, since the powers do not at once wholly cease from working. It is contrary to their natural inclination to remain thus passive, and therefore the soul dare not at first put her confidence in them, still less can she simply abandon and open herself as she must if she is to be thus illumined. For that must be done wholly passively, and at first the soul is hindered, owing to want of naked faith and pure love, which she has only in a measure and not yet in their full perfection. For she herself cannot fully and perfectly know these but by means of this same divine light, because it is incredible to her how great must be the simplicity and purity required to receive this light in its fullness, and therein to behold the divine presence, unless she be enlightened and instructed from within. So it is that the last and necessary preparation for this

light is by means of the light itself, whereby the soul is gradually taught, when she perceives that the light does not remain constantly with her, but is sometimes less, sometimes more, and sometimes vanishes entirely. Yet she sees that it is always essentially the same, and ever ready to infuse itself into her; hence she gathers that she has in herself some hidden defects which hinder the light, and she endeavours to gain more purity and simplicity and, forsaking all else, to rely wholly upon God. Thus, after due preparation, she comes at last to perceive it within her in all its brightness.

But in order to express more clearly how this heavenly light comes into a soul which has never before experienced it, and how little by little it wholly penetrates and enlightens her, let us make use of another parable. Let us suppose a man born blind, not because there is any defect in the actual eyes, but because they are covered with a thick skin which he brought with him into this world; and let us suppose that an expert surgeon took it in hand to make him see. He would not receive the sight immediately but by degrees; first, as the skin became partly worn off, he would begin to perceive some glimpses of the light so as to know when he was in the light. This would arouse a great desire to behold the light more clearly, yet observe that the eyes could not work themselves but must be content to receive the lightsome beams passively, slowly coming to know something of the nature of that light hitherto unknown to them. And slowly the

eyes are strengthened, and rendered capable of bearing the light, which at first would cause pain, just as we ourselves observe when we come out of darkness into a brilliant light. At first we cannot see well, and feel pain in our eyes, and this gradually passes away as we grow accustomed to the light. The man who had been blind would not at first be able to fix his eyes upon the light for any length of time, far less could he distinguish objects therein; yet, if his cure be prosperous, he will at last see clearly without any difficulty, and will wonder at being so encompassed with light, realising that the fault was never in the light but only in his eyes.

Thus it happens with the interior eye, and the receiving of the divine light unto the soul. At first when a man is in sin, and follows his evil inclinations wholly unconcerned with God, he is quite blind, and knows no more of the divine light than if it did not exist; yet all the time God is in him and he in God, and that interior seeing power, the spirit, is in him. For this power is not destroyed by sin but covered over, as it were, with as many thick skins as the man has defects within him; and although by the sacrament of Confession his sins are taken away, yet there remains still the root of sin—self-love—and unbridled passions and affections. These are all as skins upon the inner eye of the soul and hinder her from seeing God, but as that man applies himself to a Purgative life, mortifying his affections and evil inclinations, these skins begin to wear off. Finally, as he continues to progress and comes to the absolute

abnegation of all creatures, to abandonment of himself, to pure love and naked faith, the skins fall from his interior eyes and there is nothing between him and God.

We have said that this abnegation and resignation cannot be so suddenly obtained in their full perfection, for the soul remains yet inclined to creatures and to herself, but when her attachment is not palpable she receives some little light in her, though it comes from without, mingled with the senses, and is not supernatural. Much less has the soul attained at once to perfect love and faith, but, because the soul is doing her best to purify herself from all defects, the divine light manifests itself more and more according as it finds her prepared and dilated, bringing her to the perfection of love and faith, until at last, in this light, she beholds the hidden presence of God.

But at first this aspiring soul is like the blind man, in that she sees only some little beams of light, which flow sweetly into her interior and enkindle in her a great desire to enjoy the light in its fullness. Nor can she turn herself to these beams as yet, but at once expels them, so that all she can do is to receive them passively, permitting them to prepare and dispose her to receive them more clearly and perfectly. And after she has remained some time in this simple, receptive state, observing how these beams of the divine light manifest themselves, how simply they arise within her, cleansing and simplifying her, and strengthening her in pure love and faith; she begins to raise herself towards it, simply

casting the eyes of the spirit upon it. Yet she cannot continue long therein, but receives it as a lightning, which wholly penetrates her and swiftly elevates her, by a simple conversion of the spirit, to the light which every time begets a new clearness and satisfaction in the soul. By this she is more effectually freed from all hindrances of the senses than by the early beams of which we have spoken, and is more strengthened and confirmed in the light, receiving more knowledge thereby.

Thus when the soul remains faithful she will be set free from all impediments, and this divine light will thoroughly illumine and replenish her, until by it she raises herself to the contemplation of the hidden, divine presence within her. And she sees how, in truth, she was blind, having eyes but not seeing, being in the midst of the divine essence yet never perceiving it. Therefore the devout soul must be admonished that, for a time, in the beginning she will be aware only of some beams of the divine light, which will sweetly touch her interiorly, and to which she must yield more and more place in the centre of her soul, remaining in great simplicity, until she is gradually prepared to enjoy that noble light perfectly in herself.

Chapter the Nineteenth

How the Soul in receiving the divine light shall persevere.

It seems scarcely possible for the soul which is receiving this divine enlightenment to persevere for any length of time, containing herself thus passively without any work or turning herself to anything, not even to the light itself; for according to this doctrine the soul may have no other object than this interior light, yet, notwithstanding, she must not convert herself thereto or behold it, which seems impossible. She must first know that when we say she must not behold it we must be understood as meaning a beholding and conversion which is done by an actual observation; for the soul can have no intellectual knowledge of the light, all her knowledge thereof being but experimental. Hence her conversion and beholding must not be to the *light* itself but to the experience she has of it in herself, or to the purity and clearness which she perceives thereof in herself; this must be done so simply that it cannot properly be termed a conversion or a beholding. In order that the soul may persevere she must find something in herself to which she may turn without working upon any form of the

imagination, that is to say something which may make her mindful of God, and of His presence within her, which yet must not be an image, so that the soul may retain the divine light in the same simplicity and detachment from images; now to frame any such thing would be impossible for the soul if nature had not provided for her in this matter.

Man has within himself an inclination of heart which is subject to the power of love, and which, when (either by imagination or thought) it has actually present the object of its love, dilates itself, and rests therein, clinging thereto and enjoying it. And when it has not present that loved object it longs and thirsts for it, and sends forth the other powers in search thereof that, following the knowledge which they give, it may delight itself as though that loved object were present, according to the measure of the love it bears to it. This inclination S. Augustine calls *pondus animae*, the poise or weight of the soul. *My love*, says he, *is my poise, and thither am I carried whither my love swayeth.*[1] The soul's proper resting place is where that is which she loves, and thither is she carried by love as a stone is carried to the earth by its own weight. S. Thomas of Aquin says that this inclination is that which first moves itself amongst the powers of the soul, and therefore is moved of itself without other help.[2] In the soul of which we now speak this interior power is loose and unfettered, for the soul has already freed herself

[1] S. Aug. Conf. l. xiii, c. ix. P.L. xxxii, col. 849.
[2] Summa I, Q.LX, a.1.

from all inordinate love and attachment to creatures, and consequently easily perceives this power within her. Hitherto this power of loving was scattered upon creatures, but it is now wholly united and recollected in itself, and because the soul has converted her love to God this inclination is very subtle, noble and divine. Now the soul must strive to obtain this divine spark completely in her power, for it is the instrument wherewith she is to elevate herself to God and be absorbed in Him. But because, as yet, the soul has not entrance into God but knows by faith that He is intimately present unto her, this power of loving is very simply but unceasingly inclining to that hidden good which alone it loves, and this continues so long as there is no attachment or active working of the soul to hinder it. The inclination is no work of the soul, produced of set purpose, but a natural flowing or tendency, yet such as the soul may use as a divine aspiration to God. So long as she is not perfectly resigned in God, or has not that intimate presence of God through pure faith, of which we have spoken, this interior inclination of heart serves for a simple apprehension and remembrance of God, as often as the soul will remember and reflect thereon; for after she is perfectly resigned and clings to God by naked faith this inclination draws her inwardly to repose in Him whom, for His own sake, she dearly loves. For she is inwardly there where God is present without intermediary, and, as she, on her part, makes use of no image, this serves her for a sign of God's presence.

And inasmuch as the soul's proper resting place and centre is God, and she has a continual and natural inclination to Him, which cannot be satisfied out of Him, we cannot rely better on anything than this interior inclination, which, whenever a man is free and detached from all creatures, admonishes him of God and inclines him unto God as to his true resting place.

Now when the soul converts herself to this interior inclination sufficiently simply, she can persevere very well in this employing and detachment of herself and continue to receive the divine light. Wherefore, remaining stripped of all creatures, and perfectly desisting from her own activity and perfectly resigned to God, she shall simply sink down into herself, and will presently perceive this inclination which she must suffer in her without doing anything to make it clearer, more intimate, or nobler. She must, by a simple inward turning thereto, persevere in enjoying the inflowing beams of the divine light but, in order that this inclination may be divine and serve her for a remembrance of God, there must not be the least active work on the part of the soul, but the inclination must be passively received, both the outward and inward man being in perfect vacancy and quiet. The soul must turn herself to it with closed eyes, for she is only *in* herself and not *above* herself; nevertheless, she is not resting in herself, but is inclining out of nature into the spirit, out of time into eternity. Time, place and her own image she observes but slightly and vacantly, for she is wholly free and separated from

them, although, by reason of her weakness, not wholly averted from them or elevated above them. And by as much as she keeps herself quiet and detached exteriorly and interiorly, so much the more noble and divine does this inclination show itself, and the divine light more clearly illumine her. By means of this inclination the soul penetrates herself and discovers the divine presence within her, and therefore it may not only be called a remembrance of God but an adhering to Him; for albeit the spirit is not steadfastly converted into that divine light nor consequently into God, yet, to the uttermost of its power, it is stretching out to it and by it clinging to God, and persevering in that swift conversion to the light of which we have spoken in the former chapter. Besides these two ways there is none by which the soul can continue to use this interior light in perfect detachment.

Therefore the soul must endeavour to have them in her that thereby she may steadfastly receive this divine light, and whenever she has secured some control of herself, by detachment from creatures and cessation from her own activity, she must suffer herself to slip simply into that hidden, uncreated good which is most intimately present to her, firmly believing that she will be received by it when she resigns herself entirely to it. At the same instant she will perceive the aforesaid inclination which, at first, may seem crude and wholly natural, but, as she perseveres, will become gradually more subtle, noble and divine in proportion as the soul more

purely resigns herself to God; and having this inclination in her power, to some extent, she shall endeavour to elevate herself to that divine light. And if she applies herself constantly to this she will find out by experience all that has been said more clearly than can be expressed to her by words; for it is not well possible to declare fully in words the interior disposition of the soul with respect to this interior light. As far as possible, we have shown the devout soul that, even when she has attained to perfect interior detachment, she should not immediately raise herself to the contemplation of the divine presence, as commonly happens; for thereby she would greatly hinder herself and scarcely ever attain thereto, since this interior preparation must precede the contemplation of God.

Many remain all their lives standing at the door, and never entering into God, owing to their having failed to distinguish between this *divine light* and the *divine presence*. As soon as they become aware of the light they at once convert themselves to it, and behold it as God, thereby making a natural light out of a supernatural, and taking all excellency away from it, whilst they themselves never have the light in all its purity and nobility and remain without progress; whereas, if they received it passively, and suffered themselves to be prepared by it, they would be elevated to the contemplation of God after a most excellent and certain manner.

The reason why they do not suffer themselves to be so prepared is principally because to receive the

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light thus passively seems to them too simple a proceeding; they persuade themselves that they ought to do more, and to make use of it in a fuller and more perfect manner, whereas this activity of theirs only hinders it, and they should remain in interior quiet and peace until the light manifests itself more clearly to them. And although to an inexperienced man it may seem very simple and easy to keep himself thus interiorly attentive to that light, nevertheless, it is very hard and difficult, and to an unmortified person it is impossible to hold himself thus simply to this interior inclination, for it requires a constant and a perfect detachment from all creatures and abandonment of himself to God. He who can continue in this disposition by whatever means he may is at the next door to the highest perfection, and thereby he retains always in himself the four essential preparatory dispositions upon which we have insisted. The soul is annihilated in herself and, submitting herself rightly to this simple, loving inclination of her heart, she receives the divine light pure, whole, entire, though less clearly than she will receive it later, when she is elevated above herself and contemplates God. So, therefore, when we said that the light comes little by little, it must be understood that it does not immediately enlighten the whole soul only because the soul does not sufficiently open herself and give it way, but the light itself is always pure and unmixed. It is true that the soul has it sometimes more clearly, sometimes less, and that sometimes she contemplates God more clearly

than at another, but that happens only because the soul is not always so interiorly capable of receiving and using the light.

And although we have given the name of *light* to this divine mercy in the soul, we must not think that it is in the understanding as are other lights, for it penetrates and flows through the spirit into the whole soul and all her powers, replenishing them and producing in the will a perfect joy and heavenly content, so that it neither seeks nor desires anything else. For since both the will and the understanding have denied themselves for God's sake, both receive their reward, obtaining the repose and peace in God which, for His sake, has been forsaken in creatures. Nor is it only that infused light and joy which satisfy the soul, but the certainty she has of the nearness of the divine essence without intermediary, following upon this light as the day follows the morning, and who, in place of Himself, gives her this heavenly light until such time as she may be raised to the contemplation of Himself. Therefore, once she has reached this state, the devout soul may freely content herself therewith, without hastening too much in going forward to the contemplation of God, for when she has that light in her in truth she beholds God, according to the doctrine of S. Gregory of Nyssa who, speaking of those words of our Saviour: *Blessed be the pure of heart ; for they shall see God*:[1] understands thereby that the purified soul sees God in her interior purity, and in her alienation from

[1] Matt. v, 8.

all sin, he says, *the good ordering of affections and passions is a divinity in the soul, and a most noble image and similitude of God.*[1]

Now how can the soul be more alienated from all sin and imperfection than when she is wholly emptied of herself and all creatures, and if the soul, in her own clearness and purity, beholds God, how much more when, in addition, there comes this divine light of which we have spoken? Finally, to give a sign whereby the soul may know whether or no she have this light, let her examine whether, when she is aware of this light, she be truly detached from all creatures and herself, so that she perceives that her spirit is separated from the senses (though not yet above them), and that she adheres to no image of her own. Again let her observe whether at such times all vexations, troubles and anxiety are excluded, and whether the light rises from within and wholly penetrates her, not being infused from without; for all this is proper to the soul which has this light, which, however, she will lose by the least immortification, inordinate affection or unadvised image. By these signs she may well gather that it is wholly divine as it must make her inward man wholly divine, daily separating her more and more not only from all defects but from all creatures, images, and from herself, drawing her nearer and nearer to God.

Therefore the devout soul must reflect diligently,

[1] S. Greg. Nyss. De Beat. Oratio vi, P.G. xliv cols, 1270-1271 and 1277-1278.

and receive this doctrine as a secret and hidden art, and whenever she perceives in herself this inclination she ought to apply herself to it, with all possible simplicity, leaving all other exercises and instructions, until she find herself invited to ascend higher. This invitation she will sufficiently perceive if she has faithfully followed this interior inclination, and thus she will most certainly and easily attain to the contemplation of the hidden Deity; she will be, as it were, led by the hand unto that which otherwise she could hardly obtain, and therefore we have made so long a stay in explaining this divine light for her better instruction.

Chapter the Twentieth

How the Soul must convert herself to the Divine Presence with some signs for her guidance.

Now when the soul has reached the state we have described, she will find herself interiorly drawn to a closer union with God, and will perceive in herself a desire to be wholly absorbed and lost in Him, for, although she is now detached from all creatures, she finds herself not yet entirely rendered up to God, and so easily returns to herself. She will find that the divine light no longer satisfies her as it was wont to do, and it seems to her that she must find out something about it; this is because she has come to a nearer interior likeness to God than she knew before, and it is time for her, by means of that light, to enter into the kingdom of God within her. Hitherto she stood only at the door but had not entered in, or begun to convert herself to the contemplation of the presence of God.

But it is harder for her to learn how to proceed now than in the earlier stage, for she must make use of an interior working which is entirely spiritual and so pure and intimate that it is difficult to explain it in words, nor can the soul produce it on her own

part. However, the spirit is now prepared and, to some extent, experienced and more established in naked faith and pure love; otherwise it would be impossible to instruct the soul how to convert herself to the hidden presence of God within her. The spirit is now free from all hindrances, exterior and interior, and fit to be raised to God, but it is so unaccustomed to this new stage that it must be helped and led to God, or at least showed the way, all the more since the manner in which it must convert itself to Him is so simple that it is quite indivisible. Neither can there be anything added thereunto or taken away but it makes it unfit to find God, and although (having passed beyond all instructions) it is impossible to lay down any certain rules as to how this interior conversion to God must be done, we will give a few admonitions and signs for the better guidance of the soul.

First, the enlightened soul must by no means relinquish the interior dispositions which have been necessary in order to reach the point to which she has come, but must preserve herself in such with all possible diligence, and recover them if she find that she has swerved from them. Then, keeping herself thus detached and recollected, she will find that she is interiorly drawn to convert herself to God in either of two ways; either, in the superior part of herself, raising herself to God above all her senses and powers and her whole being; or else, in the inferior part, by sinking down into Him, overwhelming and depressing those same senses and powers into

the very lowest of herself. But she must by no means convert herself to God as it were midway between these extremes, for in that case she will not quite rid herself of the senses, and will not be able to remain so united to God or even to attain so close a union.

Now a purified and detached soul is equally prepared to seek God in either of these ways, just as to an active person it is as easy to raise his hand as to let it fall, or for a man to look upwards or downwards, and therefore the soul must accustom herself to either. The former way of elevation is necessary for her in her external works since she must raise herself above them to God; the latter is more applicable to the time of prayer, when she is abstracted, and so better preserved from distractions and hindrances from the senses, remaining in quiet and solitude, and in consequence better able to observe and bear that inaction of God in her. Therefore she shall learn to sink under and leave all images, all crude working of her own powers, and the more thoroughly she does so the more secure will she be from the hindrances of the senses, the more highly will she be elevated in the spirit, and consequently the more clearly will she find God within her. And the soul which has passed through the former exercise will find herself able to perform both the elevation and the depression (or sinking down) which we describe, and which is altogether unknown to inexperienced persons. In the latter all the powers are dispersed and scattered, which in the devout, enlightened soul are simply recollected,

so that, thus gathered together, they are a means whereby the pure and introverted soul may convert herself upwards or downwards to God as, formerly, she could convert herself outwards to creatures.

But although the soul at this stage does actually convert herself to another object, and her state differs from the former when she received the divine light only passively, yet she must keep herself as simply introverted as she did then, taking care to frame no image either of the actual conversion or of the divine presence to which she is converting herself; let her not even make any previous explicit intention of converting herself to God, for thereby she would hinder the simplicity and singleness of her mind. For she is now annihilated in herself, and neither may nor can convert herself by any effort of her own, since this must now be effected by another power, even by the *spirit*[1] which alone can perform this interior conversion. Hence, standing in that light of which we have spoken, in perfect peace, as though she had God, or at least could not miss Him, the soul must simply unlock and open her interior, either downwards or upwards, and she will perceive that a simple power will proceed from her, which will dilate her and convert her to a hidden

[1] Here and elsewhere *spirit* is used for the supreme portion of the soul, *the summit of the soul* as it is usually termed by mystical theologians. The word *soul* when used in juxtaposition to *spirit* has a limited meaning, and excludes the highest region of the soul wherein the mystical union with God takes place.

Good, which is yet more intimately within her than the light in which she has stood hitherto. For the spirit has no other operation than a simple conversion and aversion, which it performs in a moment, and yet at the same time it keeps itself, with ever more intense attention, before God, and dives into Him more deeply in the selfsame undistinguished interior operation.

Thus, simply turning herself upwards or downwards to God, the soul will be, as it were, encompassed by and received into a great darkness and hidden depth, in which she will lose herself more completely than in the former light: from this darkness she must now draw her light of contemplation, and in this darkness and depth she will perceive a hidden, uncreated *Good* which is more intimately present to her than was the former light. And she must dilate herself in this presence to the uttermost of her power in order that she may be instructed, changed, and wholly transformed *according to His good pleasure;* so that all the operation of the spirit is to keep itself interiorly vigilant and alert before the Divine *aspect*, which will manifest itself with a supernatural distinctness.

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that when the spirit elevates itself to God, above all the operations of the powers and senses, it remains there before God more by way of Active Contemplation, so that the understanding wholly converts itself to God; but, when, by diving downwards, the soul sinks herself in God, this is done more in a passive manner, since

it is chiefly the work of the will, which resigns itself wholly unto God, and the soul here is rather enjoying and possessing than beholding and contemplating. But both these manners of conversion to God are very hidden, and hence many souls deceive themselves therein; therefore we will give a few signs by which the soul may know whether she perform this conversion as she ought.

First, the soul which is rightly converted to God in this way finds herself not only detached from her own image but wholly absorbed and lost in a hidden, interior *Being*, for herein the enjoyment of the *Divine presence* differs from the use of the *divine light* of which we have treated. In order that the soul may attain to this divine presence she must be not only detached from all creatures and herself and wholly vacant,[1] but must also be elevated above herself; whereas in order to receive the divine light it is sufficient that she be free from all images and that she cease from her own active working. Hence in this latter case there is separation from herself but not oblivion or losing of herself; the soul continually remembers time and place and also her own image, although she does not rest in herself. The least commotion or observation leads her to find herself again, and she is *lost* only in the sense that she does not reflect upon herself. But this divine

[1] No Quietist doctrine is intended : *vacant* to Fr. John Evangelist implies no idle passivity, but only the stillness and receptive state necessary in order to receive the divine action : *vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus.*

essence is far above the essence of even the enlightened soul and does not arise in her, or pour itself into her, after the same manner as the light she knew previously. In order to have this the soul must convert herself to it above herself, and therefore she is far more estranged from herself, wholly turned to another object above her, not only converted thereto but lost therein, so that she truly finds herself lost, out of herself, not knowing how or where she is. For the spirit is raised above time and place, in a permanent eternity which has not the least communication with anything below. Let the soul, therefore, examine whether she be in this state or only in that we previously described, for after she has experienced them both she will find no difficulty in distinguishing them. Indeed, when the soul is somewhat practised, she will soon discern, even in the exterior man, whether she be so interiorly lost in God, for this losing causes a perfect quietness of the exterior powers and members, and if the soul does not rest in God then she must rest in nature, which will be apparent in some part or other of the body.

Another sign is whether, having been for a while thus converted to God, she find in this conversion any difficulty, or pain in any of her powers or members, by reason of the interior attention or force she uses in thus converting herself to God. For although the spirit is extended to God to the utmost of her power, and stretched as a string upon a bow, yet there is here no tedium or weariness, but, on the

contrary, a man is thereby interiorly renewed, refreshed and strengthened. Even though he had been tired before he would hereby be refreshed and renewed better than by any other means, because this interior conversion wholly appeases all commotion and trouble in the inferior part of the soul so that all the members, even the least are, as it were, in a sleep, which bodily relaxation will be the more perceived as the soul more nearly approaches to this true conversion to God. Also in the superior part, the soul receives a new strength and spiritual joy which overflows into the inferior part and even into the whole body, which is inwardly strengthened and refreshed; so that neither in the exterior nor in the interior man does this conversion cause the least weariness. Hence, when any weariness seems to result it is an evident sign that the bodily powers have cooperated, for the body only can be wearied and not the spirit.

Thus the introverted soul may, in some measure, judge whether she has done too much, for more commonly she suffers thereby rather than by doing too little; for man is prone to work, and can scarcely restrain himself from working, even when he would. Another sign that she is working wrongly is that during this conversion, her interior disposition will be without any light, knowledge or satisfaction, and after it she will find herself no more uplifted above herself and her senses than she was before, and more inclined to extroversion than to introversion. Moreover, if before she felt any trouble, vexation,

sorrow or tedium in herself she will find herself not wholly freed from such, whereas by this true conversion all such trouble should have vanished.

Finally, the best and most certain test is for the soul to observe how she finds herself at the end of her prayer, for the true conversion to God cannot but produce some evident signs and fruits. Since she is separated from all creatures and elevated in God her mind is rendered free from temptations, vexations and sorrow, and is aware of a clearness and insight; the soul is aware of an aversion from all sensuality, immortification, imperfections and want of simplicity, and is altogether inclined to God, to solitude, to mortification of self and to the exercise of all virtue. This virtuous disposition she has in her not by any manifold activity, but in an interior peace, born of a pure resignation of herself to God, and which persists even after she has left her solitude and is engaged in business and activity.

Having now reached this stage the soul must by no means change, for the next means to keep the presence of God is to be as changeless as God is changeless; hence all her care and diligence must be to obtain this true conversion more speedily in its full perfection, and to remain longer therein until such time as she has it in her power, as she has other operations of her powers and senses. And although she find little satisfaction at first, not perceiving the excellence of the divine presence, but rather feeling that she has no interior object, and beholds and contemplates nothing of God, she must not think

that she ought to act otherwise, but must know that it happens so to everyone at the beginning, and must be so. With a soul thus beginning it is as with one who comes out of a great light into a room of which the windows are shuttered, but into which light enters through the chinks. Those who are already in the room can see one another and what they are doing, but he who has just come in from the light will imagine the room to be wholly in darkness, though if he remain there gradually he will become accustomed to the reduced light, and will be able to see. In like manner the soul which first comes into the presence of God neither sees nor feels anything divine and thinks that she is completely idle. This is because she is accustomed to the interior light, which is very pleasing and grateful to the soul, and because the divine presence (which is far above that light in its excellence and subtlety) shines in the darkness of oblivion of all created things. Thus, at first, she does not see God, although she be converted to Him; yet if she remain constant her interior eyes will lose their incapacity, and become able to contemplate that uncreated light. Then she will begin to see and know that, in very truth, she has God for her object, and that in Him she will have and enjoy all good and full satisfaction.

Chapter the Twenty-first

What the Soul here experiences of God, and how carefully she should keep the same.

The soul seeking God, which hitherto has faithfully followed us, may now say joyfully *I have found whom my soul loveth,*[1] and her name may be changed and she be called a soul *enjoying* God. For truly she has found her God whom she thus far pursued out of love, and that not in any image or likeness, but above all such, according to her desire; indeed she cannot desire anything more than she has found, for she plainly sees that what is above this does not belong to this life but to that future life which she is awaiting, where what she now beholds but dimly and obscurely, she will see clearly. Moreover, she sees that all which is beneath what she enjoys is less than that for which she was created and should obtain in this life, and hence she cannot be contented therewith or find rest therein. She has obtained that *rest* which is her only end in this life, whither she found herself drawn, and she has become the *kingdom of God.* She knows, tastes and enjoys a truth, beauty, goodness and delight more noble and perfect than all

[1] Cant. iii, 4.

she ever knew, tasted or experienced before could it all be put together; yet she cannot properly express what her object is, or how she has it present, but only that it is the origin of all created wisdom, beauty, goodness and perfection in which is yet infinitely more comprehended than is created. She has this present not properly by sight, conversion, touch, taste or feeling, yet notwithstanding she has Him by all these and much more. According to all her power and capacity she is most intimately united to God, and although she cannot see clearly that God is her object yet, in a manner which cannot be described, she has an interior witness thereof much more certain than any which the senses could afford, or which all books or teachers could give her. And she perceives that all the prayers and hymns of holy Church properly belong to that hidden essence, which she has interiorly present, and to which she finds in herself such a reverence and devotion as though she were actually before the throne of God; not that she produces this devotion, but it comes of itself out of that *essence*.

And here the soul, who is thus enjoying God, is perfectly satisfied according to all her desires; nor is she any longer anxious as to what she shall do to please God, for she knows full well that she can neither do nor give more than she has done and given, and that God can require no more of her. All she is or can she has entirely offered up to him, and now no longer rests upon anything but her own *nothingness*, knowing that ever preserving that,

she satisfies God. Neither can she desire anything of God nor pray for anything which concerns herself, but her only prayer is that she may increase more and more in the knowledge of her own nothingness, and that God's will may be done in her and in all men now and forever.

She now realises how crudely she once sought God when she converted herself to Him by means of images, considerations and other exterior exercises, seeing that she is now held captive by Him, and encompassed with Him who is not now to be known by means of images and parables but interiorly. Finally, she realises that to deny herself and all creatures for God is to seek God rightly, and to lose these altogether is truly to find Him. She experiences what a good exchange she has made by delivering up herself and all she has to God, for whatever she has denied and forsaken for God she has more truly obtained and enjoyed in God and infinitely more besides; for God Himself is also become hers. And she enjoys more liberty now that she is wholly resigned in God than she did when remaining in herself, for the will of God which governed her before—and oftentimes against her desire—is now become her will, so that whatever happens or can happen to her is pleasing unto her; nor would she have it otherwise, and in this she finds more sweetness than she ever found in anything which she did of her own will. She now also enjoys the fruit of her pure love, and clearly perceives that the less she seeks herself in God the more she obtains, and

that, moreover, it is against all reason to seek anything in God but Himself, and that the soul which does not seek God for Himself can never be raised into union with Him. Lastly, she knows now by experimental knowledge what formerly she only believed in obscurity, and she actually experiences that the more confidently and resolutely she casts herself upon God and trusts in Him the more clearly and surely she finds Him.

Thus does the soul which loves God now enjoy the fruits of her long pilgrimage when she has well laboured, for now she finds in herself the *kingdom of God* which is hidden and unknown to other men, because it can be found only in abnegation and annihilation. To such a soul we can do no more than only admonish her that she remain diligent and endeavour to continue where she now is; for she is now come into the school of eternal wisdom, where God Himself will teach her by His holy inspiration what she is further to do in order to remain united to Him. Therefore, the only lesson we can give her is that she very strictly observe her interior disposition with respect to the four points we have before laid down and that, with all diligence, she keep the interior sight clear and pure, allowing the divine light, and that Presence which she has now begun to enjoy, to expel from her all obscurity and impediments which may yet remain in her. Hence, all the time she can get she must spend in abstraction and solitude, yielding free passage to this divine light, and learning thereby how to elevate

herself interiorly to the contemplation of God. Let her be on her guard lest she yield place to anything which might dim this light for, as she could obtain it only by perfect abnegation and annihilation of herself, if she wishes to keep it she must live and die in this same *nothingness*. The soul must resolve to walk henceforth in an exceeding great purity and perfection of all virtue, for she must take upon herself not only a virtuous life but a heavenly one, even a divine conversation accounting as great small defects which other men do little regard. The least superfluity or failing in words or works, omissions, images of creatures, all these she must avoid, no less than she would avoid great defects. She must cast her eyes rather upon angels than upon men, and must imitate their heavenly purity, for truly she has taken upon her an angelic and heavenly life, having entered into that kingdom of God which is within her into which nothing defiled can enter. She cannot attain better to this purity than by constantly turning herself to that divine presence which she has found, for this separates her from all that is created or temporal, and raises her above all to an angelic purity. Nevertheless, she must not omit the works of obedience and charity, but there willingly suffer her own loss, and leave God for God, as we shall explain later. Let the soul say with the spouse, *I held Him, neither will I let him go, till I bring Him into my mother's house*,[1] for as yet she is not established in the deepest and most inward abyss,

[1] Cant. iii, 4.

whereof David said: *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy face from the disturbance of men.*[1] She can still be moved, troubled, disquieted and driven back; indeed many have been where she now is, and have afterwards become as estranged from God as though they had never known or experienced anything of Him, and this because they did not diligently keep their hold of Him. For although the soul at this stage has truly obtained God she is not confirmed in Him, for which much time and diligence is required.

She is like a tree newly-planted, which has not yet taken root, and so is easily moved and loosened by the wind, and may be blown down; therefore, care, diligence and time are required in order that it may become strong and firmly rooted. Nothing is more necessary than that it remain quiet in the ground whence it draws nourishment, and in the same manner the soul, which is now separated from creatures and herself and converted to God, is easily dissipated and must remain tranquil in God, adhering fast to Him until such time as she be confirmed in Him above all change. Therefore let her be very careful to keep with the greatest care what she has obtained, clinging to the presence of God and to the divine light as one in danger of drowning clings to a plank; for just as such an one begins to sink immediately he lets go of the plank, so the soul sinks into her nature and senses the instant she leaves the presence of God and the divine light which she has now gained.

[1] Ps. xxx, 21.

Chapter the Twenty-second

How the Soul is hindered through her old defects and cannot peaceably continue in contemplation.

The soul which has thus arrived at the contemplation of God will find that she is only able to continue therein for a short time, for the old hindrances will often distract her against her will. For although she has wholly forsaken all creatures, and resigned herself to God out of pure love, and stands in naked faith as we have said, yet the root of self-love is still in her, and there remains an inclination to creatures; the senses also often seek for some sensible feeling in God, intruding themselves into the interior operations of the spirit, and so hindering them. Neither does this contradict our former teaching that the soul, by her previous preparation, has become dead to herself; for thus she is before God, since, according to her free-will, she is dead to all creatures and to herself for God's sake and for all eternity; and at all times she endeavours to forsake and mortify these affections and impressions, which she does succeed in doing for a time, during which time she finds and enjoys God. Yet nature and senses are not yet rooted out, nor the spirit utterly rendered up,

and this not from want of will but owing to want of sufficient practice; hence the soul is often troubled against her will owing to the diversity of her affections and inclinations and also by recurring images, impressions and thoughts, all of which hinder her contemplation of God. For although all these are not in the spirit but only in the inferior part of the soul (into which they always have entrance, so long as this is not actually suspended and drawn up into the superior part) the spirit can hardly withhold itself from turning to them on account of the union which it has with the inferior part; and although this turning is without any will, and almost without observation, yet it hinders that perfect detachment necessary if the presence of God is to be enjoyed.

And even though the spirit were set free from all these hindrances and commotions of the soul, nevertheless, in the beginning, it cannot continue long elevated in God by reason of its inbred instability, through which it can hardly fix itself upon anything for any long time, but often falls away through a natural forgetfulness, even against the will. It is expecially hard for the spirit to remain recollected and inwardly attentive to God, because in this case the lower powers of the soul have little satisfaction and so easily withdraw themselves, and incline the spirit with them. But of these two hindrances the former is the more serious, for if the soul be merely temporarily distracted without any turning to creatures she is easily rectified by a simple turning back to God, whereas if there be

any clinging, more or less, to a creature there is always a certain commotion and obscurity caused thereby.

Still more serious is it when, contrary to pure love, the soul seeks herself in God, desiring to rest in His gifts or to satisfy her self-love with the divine presence. Then she is not converted to any created thing distinct from her, but there arises in her a dark cloud which separates her from God more seriously than would conversion to creatures, for now what is uncreated and supernatural is made created and natural. Most hurtful of all is it when any doubt arises in the soul concerning the naked faith above described, which happens easily in the case of beginners; for the senses covet some natural certainty in God, and cannot resign themselves to what they know not. This interior strife is far the most dangerous of possible impediments, for in all the other cases faith is always left, by which the spirit may help itself, and in which it may rest and not give way to the objections of the senses. But in this last case the infidelity takes away this support, telling the soul that she is deceived, so that she has nothing upon which to lean, and is bewildered in great darkness.

Thus we see that although the soul has now found her Beloved according to her desire, so that she no longer stands in need of human instruction in order to approach Him, yet in this quiet possessing and enjoying of God she is diversely hindered both exteriorly and interiorly; hence it is important that she should know how to behave herself. Ignorance

as to how to act in these circumstances is the reason why many remain a long time without making any progress, and sometimes lose what they have already gained; we will therefore endeavour to give the soul some clear instruction whereby she may know what she ought to do against these hindrances, that at length she may enjoy her Beloved in perfect peace.

Chapter the Twenty-third

How the Soul has one simple remedy against the aforesaid impediments and what that is.

The soul which was rejoicing in having found her Beloved we have now made sad by setting before her all the trials to which she is still subject. She thought she had reached the haven, and now finds that she is yet in the midst of waves and winds on the inconstant sea; she thought she had gained the victory, and was henceforth to enjoy the crown for which she had fought, yet now she understands that she is still surrounded by enemies and must still fight; all of which makes her heavy and sorrowful. But she must not yield to this sorrow for so to do would do her more harm than all the former impediments put together, for it would be manifestly sinning against pure love, which requires that she do what she can and commit the rest to God, content that He should do with her as He pleases. The soul should be content that God should reveal Himself to her at such time and after such a manner as may please Him, and she should be content even to be always deprived of all experimental knowledge of God. For to her belongs the abnegation but the

illumination belongs to God. Therefore she ought not to build her rest and comfort upon the interior experience and feeling but upon the complete emptying of herself, after which she must strive to the uttermost until she obtain it. Therefore, knowing that the subtle human nature in her is not yet dead but only asleep, she shall, with a new courage, say with the Prophet: *I will pursue mine enemies and overtake them ; and will not return till they fail.*[1] For the soul has learned that she has no other enemy than her own self, and as much as she remains in herself so much does she exclude God; hence the experience ought to stir her up with all fervour and diligence to pursue that pernicious self until she has secured the precious *nothing*, or death of self, by which she comes to possess eternal life. She has already a great advantage, in that she has forsaken the world and found the right way to God, as well as the means to vanquish her enemy, so that although she has not yet gained the victory she has the certainty thereof. And against all these aforesaid hindrances, though they seem many and various, one single remedy suffices, as we shall presently show. For although, to an unmortified and unspiritual soul, the difficulties seem to be many and great, yet to the soul which is enjoying God they are as nothing, seeing that with her whole free-will she is dead to creatures and to herself, and that out of pure love of God whom she serves in naked faith, and that God accounts her as she is according to that free-will,

[1] Ps. xvii, 38.

and not according to her inferior part. Moreover, all the manifold impediments cannot enter into the spirit or reach it, any more than they can reach a soul separated from the body; nor can the spirit receive anything through or from them but only from God whose image it is. Hence, so long as this soul remains elevated in spirit to God, she ought not to fear any images or commotions for they cannot touch her.

She is like to one who is in the top of a high tower which, although it may be attacked below, cannot be won so long as he who is within keeps himself above and holds the doors shut. Therefore such an one should keep himself in rest and quiet, not regarding the noise and commotion below. But if the one besieged were to come down, and in order to drive away the besiegers to open the gates, doubtless he would put himself in danger of being captured and losing his stronghold. In like manner the soul is safe so long as she keeps herself above, in the superior part, without paying any attention to accidents or troubles which cannot do her any harm; but if she turns herself outwards to these she runs the risk of being overcome by them. Moreover, the soul is now simply resting in God, and it is as important that she should avoid all lower, more material working of her own as to avoid all images and impressions. For all her former use of the imagination her observations, affections and purposes served merely to withdraw her free-will (then obstinate and rebellious) from creatures and fix it in God, and then to hold

it so fixed. But this soul, by diligent practice and perseverance, has her will in her own hands, and in an instant can become wholly turned to God, understanding that such conversion implies a complete detachment from all that is defective, human, or created; consequently she resists all impediments in the most certain and secure manner.

Such is the only remedy which the soul is to use against all recurring images, fancies and disturbances, and by thus simply turning to God she will resist them in the best way. For although these may pass before her she is in no way united to them, nor does she rest in them as once she did; they come in a moment, and in a moment they are taken away. We may take the common example of sleep, during which all a man's powers and senses necessarily cease from working, and are as oblivious of all things as though he were actually dead. So must it be in this commune with God, in which the senses hinder the soul just as their activity may hinder a man from sleeping; as he who wishes to sleep must suspend all operation of the senses, so must he do who would unite himself to God. Let us consider how a man acts who wishes to sleep and is hindered by some anxiety of mind, or some exterior noise, or by bodily pain. So long as he reflects upon this hindrance and allows his senses to busy themselves upon it, so long will it keep him awake; hence he tries to rid his mind of it, not laboriously but by gently withdrawing his thoughts from whatever the disturbance may be and endeavouring to

forget it. He may even need sometimes to use violence with himself in order to do this if the trial be very painful or disturbing, yet if he would sleep he must so rid himself of it, and the more gently and simply he does so the sooner will he sleep.

Behold after what manner the soul must behave herself with regard to her senses and lower powers when these vex and hinder her interior peace and union with God; for she must on no account attend to anything whatsoever which the understanding, the memory, or the inferior will may offer to her, no matter how deeply it may seem to enter into her or how much commotion it may cause. She must simply turn away from it, and remain thus constantly denying herself and all her senses, just as does the person who wishes to sleep, and as one who hears a knocking at his door and has no wish to answer it feigns himself to be not at home, and does not stir however much the other may knock and make a noise. Thus must the soul behave, as well in time of prayer as at other times, whenever any created thing is represented to her, until such time as she has become accustomed to let all things slip by as though she were asleep; and this is the only way she has by which to rid herself of all impediments.

Chapter the Twenty-fourth

The simple way, by which the Soul shall overcome all recurring impediments, is more at length declared.

Although the soul may now observe how she must bear herself with respect to all exterior and interior distractions yet, since many fail here, we shall explain this interior opposition at greater length. The soul is much inclined to fear that she is not doing enough by so simply repelling all such hindrances, and she is inclined to think that she must resist such with all her strength in a more active manner, as she did in the case of temptations which would withdraw her from God and lead her into sin.

First of all, on no account should the soul be distressed when she finds herself assailed by innumerable wanderings of the imagination and other commotions, be they never so distracting; this is useless and unreasonable, for she cannot rid herself of these, and to worry about them does her far more harm than do the troubles themselves. As well might a sailor in a storm rage and fight against the winds and waves, for it is as little in the power of the soul, which is not yet wholly converted to God, to hinder these fantasies and distractions from assailing her, or to

expel them once they have done so. For the causes of these are above her, and often the devil is responsible for them, yet they cannot harm her unless she wills it; whereas by disquieting herself she expels God from her, for He can rest only in perfect peace, and she may find Him only by disregarding and forgetting all these trials. Moreover, all anxiety and interior commotion depress the spirit beneath nature and the senses, and for a long time leave a trouble in the soul which comes between her and God.

Hence the soul should only the more constantly and watchfully keep her hold upon God, so as to surmount all disturbances and suffer no injury from them; nor should she work violently to expel them, but simply act as though they were not, not even desiring or praying to be freed from them. But also she must proceed simply in her usual spiritual exercise, raising herself to God as though impediments did not exist, unless she be so oppressed that she seems unable, in which latter case let her remain sleeping spiritually, as has been said. And although she be often distracted from God she must at once recollect herself as soon as she perceives that she has wandered from Him, and that with as great simplicity and quietness of mind the hundredth or thousandth time as at the first or second, and whether the distraction has endured for a long time or been but momentary. The soul must act as one who seeks something among thorns and nettles, who, although he often prick and sting himself, is not therefore

violently incensed against the thorns and nettles, but handles them more warily, knowing that otherwise he will but increase his own pain.

If the soul become angry and impatient with herself because she has suffered herself to be so often and so easily led away by these imaginations and thoughts (as often silly people do), she does yet more foolishly, and hinders herself needlessly. She resembles a man who takes a great deal of trouble to separate some bad seed from the good, and because, perhaps, he notices that he often mistakes the bad for the good should be angry with himself and throw back all the bad seed, mixing the two again. Such an one would do very foolishly, and give himself more labour without necessity or reason; so is it with the soul which is busied in separating the spirit from the senses, and becomes impatient because she often fails and forgets herself. For she turns all upside down, and again mingles the senses with the spirit which afterwards, with great labour and pain, she endeavours to separate. It happens very easily to every one to forget God, and therefore it is hardly possible that a beginner, who is still more inclined to extroversion than introversion, can watch himself so carefully as never to forget God and turn to passing images and thoughts. Hence, instead of being vexed with herself, the soul should merely profit by the occasion to watch herself more closely, and by interior constancy gradually become more fixed in God, and with all possible simplicity and peace of heart return to God as soon as she is aware

that she has been distracted. And if, perhaps, she does not perceive so soon, or at least so clearly, that presence of which she was formerly aware, but remains troubled by these recurring images, let her not, on that account, doubt of the presence of God or seek more anxiously than usual, for thereby she will only fall back into sensible operations. From the first moment that she is mindful of God and converts herself to Him she must do nothing but keep herself as quiet as though she clearly enjoyed His presence, simply suffering whatever may interiorly obscure her and come between her and God; and it will all vanish away because it can remain only when the spirit is converted to it. Anything which the soul may do in consequence of this interior disturbance must of necessity proceed from the co-operation of the senses and lower powers, for the spirit has no other operation than this simple, wholly interior, conversion which is the work of a moment. When the soul thus returns to her contemplation it may happen that she finds she has not been faithful in resisting distractions, but has allowed herself to rest in them, and has been inclined to rest in sensible impressions, so that she finds herself, as it were, estranged from God. Yet even in this case let her return to God as simply and familiarly as ever, just as though she had not been disloyal to him; for all sorrow, shame and shyness, which she might allow herself to feel if she delayed, would but come between her and God, and she would drop back again into herself; whereas she can repair her

disloyalty and perfectly reconcile herself to God by at once turning back to him. Nevertheless, she will not find herself again in that union with God until she has perfect contrition for her former unfaithfulness, and has made a firm purpose of amendment; for she cannot come to God without perfect detachment from creatures, and full resignation of herself out of pure love, which interior disposition actually contains in itself all the sorrow and purpose of amendment required in order to be perfectly reconciled to God. And therefore when the soul only renews her conversion to God, she truly and actually does acknowledge and blot out her infidelity much more perfectly than she would do with many words, whilst she realises the gravity of her fault by means of the obstacle which she finds it has placed between her and God; when, by the purity of her renewed interior union, she has removed this intermediary, she has thereby a proof of her reconciliation. Neither should the soul lose time and disquiet herself by considering how gravely and exactly wherein she has sinned, for it may well happen that some thoughts may remain a while in the understanding, which may cause some interior disturbance without any concurrence of the will, and consequently there is nothing bad or sinful in the matter. It is quite possible for a man to think of one thing with his understanding and with his bodily eyes behold another, and that without any distraction to the former. In the same way there may be some motion of sensual concu-

piscence without any consent of the free-will, and still more may the soul be elevated in spirit whilst there is some image or movement of the lower powers and senses to which she pays no heed. Consequently, by examining herself the soul will probably not attain to any certainty as to how far she may have sinned knowingly and willingly, but she will understand best of all by turning back to God, when the divine light will instruct her both as to the gravity of her fault and how she should behave herself concerning it in Confession. This simple turning back to God is the only means whereby the soul, which is in union with God, is to resist all exterior and interior hindrances, and persevere in the quiet enjoying of her Beloved. Hence, once she has found this in herself, she must relinquish all other means as unprofitable and hurtful to her (although they may be useful to others), and hold herself in the simplicity and steadfastness of which we have spoken, whatever images or representations may intrude themselves, and however good they may seem to be; for she is far nearer to God by this simple conversion than she can be by means of any meditations or working of the imagination.

Chapter the Twenty-fifth

That the Soul must not separate herself from God for pain, vexation or other sufferings; but must therein contemplate the Passion and Cross of Christ.

But it often happens that some of the aforesaid hindrances so violently attack the senses that it is almost impossible for the soul to forget them and to remain as insensible as though she slept, still remaining elevated to God without paying any attention to them. Such are many bodily pains and interior troubles, which so seize upon a man that not only can he not turn away from them but can hardly keep his peace of mind, insomuch that he is prone to sorrow and to break forth into complaints, using all diligence in order to free himself from the suffering. For although in his superior will he takes that suffering willingly from the hand of God, nevertheless when it is actually upon him, and extremely painful to nature, he opposes himself strongly against it; the superior will, also, moved to compassion, inclines itself to the sensitive part and consequently the whole soul is disturbed and the spirit withdrawn from divine contemplation.

The soul requires to be taught how to act in such a case, for she is subject to many and violent trials of this kind which often last for long, and so would withdraw her very hurtfully from God, or if she were to resist them courageously, it would only be with much labour. She must proceed now in quite another manner and whereas, in the case of other hindrances and distractions we said that she was to ignore them and forget them, now, in the case of these sufferings, we say that she is to retain them in her and turn herself to them, taking them for her object instead of the divine presence. For since she cannot remove them, of necessity she must acknowledge God in them, for in this state of union she can separate nothing from God; she must turn to her profit what would otherwise hinder her and use it as a further means of uniting herself with Him.

This is a mystery and an excellent exercise, utterly destroying in the soul all sensuality and self-love, and uniting her certainly and strongly to God, placing her above all fear, grief and instability. For the reason why all images, representations and active movements of the imagination cause a separation, or intermediary, between God and the soul is because the soul inclines to some creature or rests in something to which she is naturally drawn, hence the more agreeable the thing be to nature the more danger is there of separation from God, and the less pleasing the object the less dangerous it is to the soul. That which is most pleasing to nature and senses is most contrary to the Spirit of God, and what

is most against nature and senses is most conformable to His Spirit. Consequently if the soul willingly accept anything painful to nature she can behold the same in spirit, and contemplate God therein; for since nature and senses cannot convert themselves into it (but rather avoid it so far as possible), it follows that it must be out of pure love and nakedness of spirit when the soul converts herself thereunto.

But for this it is necessary first that the soul not only accept the pain or sorrow with perfect equanimity without disquieting herself, but that she go joyfully to meet it. For since she must acknowledge God in all things, pain and grief must be no less welcome to her than was the divine presence; hence she must by no means seek for consolation or desire to be delivered from it but, on the contrary, she must embrace the pain and reject any comfort, either spiritual or corporal. Therefore, when the soul perceives in herself any joy arising from the knowledge that what she suffers comes from God, or that she is pleasing God by thus suffering, let her at once put such joy from her and hold herself nakedly in the pain. Nor should she shrink from the memory of the grief if the trouble be one of mind, but must bring before herself what she knows to be painful to nature, though if to do this needs any active effort it is better that she should lose and forget it in God, for otherwise it will come between her and God.

Then the soul is to turn herself to the suffering in

perfect simplicity and vacancy, and receive it as a heavenly and divine gift, using all diligence lest she allow any fretting of the lower nature to enter her heart, and bravely forsaking all feelings and sensitive movements, just as she has learned to forsake all images and distracting thoughts. This she can do through that divine light, with which she is to convert herself to this suffering, just as she formerly did to the divine presence. Thirdly, having thus descended into the suffering the soul must receive it passively, not desiring it to be greater or less than it actually is, and doing nothing to alter it; for this is sometimes in a man's power to do, and he is prone to do it, though he thereby ceases to be perfectly abandoned to God, and lowers it all to the level of the purely natural.

Now when the soul behaves herself interiorly after this manner she will behold the suffering as the Cross of Christ, and will feel to it an interior reverence as to Christ hanging upon the Cross; not that she is to work actively and form any image of Christ and his sufferings (for that is not suited to her present state), but simply to turn to that suffering in her in the supernatural manner we have described. Then there will arise in her an intimate reverence as to Christ crucified; for she beholds the pain and suffering as a created thing united with the divinity, and this is only the Humanity of Christ of which she now receives an interior witness surpassing all natural reason so that she sees clearly that no purely human understanding or power is able to produce

so noble an object of Christ's Humanity.[1] And because she cannot comprehend how the union of that suffering is compatible with the impassible deity, she remains in a continual expectation that it may be clearly shown to her, and that she may more evidently know what and how God suffered in His Humanity. This expectation is not a waste of time, even though she may receive no new light from above, because that aversion from creatures and close union with God in which she stands cannot be without progress, since it purifies the soul from all attachment to creatures and to herself, and establishes her in God. This is all the more true since the suffering is more present to her than the hidden deity and is so wholly contrary to nature. But this exercise, and all that we say of it, can in no wise be understood by him who is not well practised in that utter detachment which we have taught, for such an one is too much fixed in himself, and unable to raise his interior suffering above the mere sensible feeling of the natural man or to behold in it Christ crucified. Therefore the soul enjoying God must reflect well upon this, that she may learn how to exercise herself interiorly after this manner in the Passion of Christ; for then she will no more fear any pain, suffering, contempt or vexation, but will accept them joyfully, and willingly meet them that

[1] Compare the teaching of Canfield as given in *The Capuchins* by Fr. Cuthbert O.S.F.C. vol ii, p. 411-412. As given here the teaching is obscure, and seemingly the author is speaking from personal experience.

thereby she may be perfectly united and made conformable to her crucified Saviour. And when she has gained some experience, she shall not only act thus when driven thereto by the violence of the pain, but as often as she feels any suffering or affliction of heart, for this is the right and only way in which such a soul should behave herself in all adversity. Nor should she endeavour in any way to alter or lessen the suffering by any human means (even though such be otherwise lawful), for that is against the pure love of God, the hatred of herself, and the following of Christ which she must perpetually practise. Nevertheless, this is not to be understood of bodily suffering, which often requires other treatment, but of interior grief, affliction and adversity, all of which she must endure to the uttermost. And this is the most excellent and perfect way in which to exercise one's self in the Passion of Christ, incomparably more acceptable to Christ and more profitable to the soul than if, by images and use of her imagination, she should represent it to her.

Chapter the Twenty-sixth

How the Soul should behave herself if, through coldness of spirit, she is unable to perceive the divine presence.

We assume that, at this stage, the soul is diligent and careful to use all the remedies against exterior and interior impediments which we have set down, and that, thanks to her faithful practice, she has now reached that perfection in which she can turn to her Beloved whenever she pleases and, without hindrance, remain with Him in perfect rest and peace of heart. Nevertheless she must know that this perception will not be always perfectly alike; for the divine presence will make itself evident more clearly and with more satisfaction to the soul at one time than at another, and sometimes she will be unable to perceive it, although she acts as usual, and is not conscious of having caused any impediment herself. We judge it necessary to warn her about this, and also to instruct her to the best of our power, otherwise she may lose both time and progress in doubts and questioning. For many who find themselves in this interior disposition believe it to be aridity and departure from God, of which they read in many spiritual books, and decide therefore that

they must endure it to the end, and that nothing more can be done. Or else they think that they must resume their own activity and enkindle afresh in themselves the love of God; but by the first they fall into a false rest or idleness, and by the second they return to an operative action which is hurtful likewise, so that both alike hinder them from God.

The soul must know, therefore, that although she receives the *divine light* passively when she is naked from all creatures and vacant from her own working, yet she has not the *presence of God* in the same way, but must convert herself to it by an intimate operation, elevating herself by means of that interior light to the very summit of the soul, above all her powers and senses; or else sinking down into the depths of her own *nothing* so that, as a string on a bow, she stands stretched out and converted to God. And although this be done without labour, nevertheless to the performance thereof goes all the capability and ability of the soul, all the liveliness, agility and watchfulness of the whole man, who is here wholly recollected before the secret presence of God.

Now all human working is unstable and changeable, sometimes more, sometimes less, and after the human powers have been at their height they begin to relax little by little until they stop. This is evident in the case of the bodily powers, but we experience it also in our intellect, which converts itself to the self-same object now more quickly now less, and understands more easily at one time than at another;

and when it has long been attentive in the speculation of some subtle matter it gradually relaxes and becomes dulled. This happens because the natural powers of the body, which are necessary to the working of the understanding, are not always alike well disposed. Among all the operations of the soul there is none more subtle, intimate and forcible than that wherewith she retains God present unto her, and, therefore, it also must diminish by degrees and finally cease; for, although it be the purest and most spiritual of all, it is not absolutely independent of the body. The soul stands elevated as to her summit, but below she is united to the body, and hence is continually being attacked by the senses, and continually striving against these attacks and keeping herself elevated. In consequence, when the soul receives no special assistance from above, the interior attention to God gradually relaxes, nor can it continue for any long time; hence it is apparent that this departure of the divine presence is not due to any fault on the part of the soul, but only because she is still united to the body and so shares in its weaknesss. The only remedy is to stir up and quicken her fainting spirit to new life and vigour, but this she cannot do since the spirit is the summit and highest power of the soul, which itself quickens all the lower powers and so can itself be invigorated only from above. Even if the soul were now to apply herself to good considerations, meditations or other operative exercises, she would not thereby be able to enkindle the former fervour and alacrity,

but would rather put herself back by returning to the works of her sensitive powers. Nevertheless she may not stand still, waiting until the old fervour be revived by a new influx from God, for with her there can be no standing still but only a continual going backwards or forwards. The only remedy is to hold herself by the divine light, which remains in her so long as she does not turn to creatures or decline from her perfect resignation to God, and thus she may remain above all images and sensitive operations, with no intermediary between her and God and prepared to be raised again to the divine contemplation.

Now the only way by which the soul can retain this divine light in her when she is not actually thereby converted to God (or to some external object purely for God, of which we shall treat later), is that which we have already given her when she first became aware of the light in her. We told her then to receive it passively, permitting it to flow into her, and by means of that interior inclination (of which we also spoke then) simply observing it or casting her interior sight upon it in a moment. This knowledge will serve her not only in the beginning, when she is gradually coming to the divine presence, but later on, when by reason of her weakness, she cannot retain it. Thus the loving soul will be able to remain in the very next degree to God; she will not lose her Beloved, nor depart from His union, but will remain sitting with the Spouse, under the shadow of her Beloved when she cannot fully

see His face. Otherwise there is a danger of her falling back into nature in times of dereliction, for between nature and spirit there is no resting place for even one moment.

In this way shall the soul convert herself by the loving inclination of her heart to at least the remembrance of God, with which she must content herself as though she were still in contemplation of Him. For in all the interior changes which happen to her by God's permission, or are due to her natural disposition, she must remain so steadfast in herself as not to suffer herself to feel her interior abundance or penury in the least; otherwise she will be leaving that blessed state of *nothing* (or self annihilation) and turning again to herself and her own activity. She may, nay she ought always according to her power to seek to be united to God in the closest and most perfect manner, and yet she must have no other why or wherefore than God's will and pleasure; as contented with little as with much, with poverty as with riches, and ever more assured of her own nothingness.

Chapter the Twenty-seventh

That in this exercise is no aridity or desolation for the Soul.

And when the soul exercises herself thus interiorly, according to all our admonitions, no desolation or aridity can befall her, such as is common to all other exercises; this we think well to declare unto her more at length, so that she may know that all the hindrances which now and then prevent her from finding God come from herself. Hence she must always strive to be united to God, and for no bodily pain or interior sorrow or desolation to fail to behold God in the very midst of such and to keep close to Him. Neither must she ever think that God has left her or that she cannot attain to Him, but must firmly believe that in this exercise there is no aridity or desolation, such as teachers and books mention, for it simply consists in *having nothing, being nothing, desiring nothing, but to be perfectly resigned to the will of God: desiring or choosing nothing else but to be purely what God pleases. He who is nothing, has nothing, desires nothing can lose nothing; nor can anything be taken away from him whereby he may be accounted arid or desolate.*

For although sometimes something may be given to him, for all that he has no more than before, for he pays no more heed to it than as though he had never had it; and so when it is again taken from him he does not consider he has lost anything, for when he had it he never considered it as his own; when deprived of it he still has what he most desires, *his own nothingness and the good pleasure of God.*

Consequently the soul which is in these dispositions never has of her own more at one time than at another, nor does she lose what she had before, although she is sometimes raised to a clearer contemplation of God, and perceives some particular *inaction* of God in her, and at another time is wholly deprived of such. For she never attached herself to anything of the kind as *her own*, but left it to Him to whom only it belonged, to whom she had given full power to do in her and with her according to His will. However she finds herself interiorly the soul never relies or rests upon it, but leaves it all to God, to whom she belongs and, whatever her state, she remains content and in peace. Nor can the soul be called arid or desolate even because she is deprived of all sense of the divine presence, as is said in the cases of other spiritual exercises; for these latter do not consist in the exercise of naked faith but in the senses, nor have they God for their object but His gifts. Those who practise such devotion rely upon sensible and experimental feeling of the presence of God, but this form of prayer rests wholly upon faith, and enjoys God Himself not His gifts; the soul firmly

believes, yea even knows by experience, that God is always present even when she is deprived of all sensible pleasure in Him, and hence she is never disturbed or anxious, nor does she ever think that she is without God. On the other hand, the souls who have never been raised above the senses have their interior sight always obscured, and when they are deprived of sensible perception imagine that God has withdrawn Himself. They are defective in true faith, and by reason of their inordinate sensitiveness and want of self-abnegation God cannot show Himself to them interiorly; consequently in this state of obscurity they often leave off their accustomed exercises, thinking them unprofitable, and so they throw themselves into real aridity and desolation.

But the enlightened soul is as a man who, seeing the sunlight hidden by thick mists does not disquiet himself, because he knows that the mists will pass away, and that the sun, which is always there, will show itself again. Such a soul stands in naked faith; she knows that God will not withdraw Himself so long as she raises no obstacle to His entrance, and she sees that she is ready for that entrance of God so long as she rests in her own nothingness. When she does not perceive His presence she knows that it is only a temporary incapability on her part, and that it will pass away, and God will manifest Himself again.

We will make this clearer by a simple example: we may be deprived of the light of the sun either by its setting or because of some thick clouds or mist in the air; in the first case the deprivation is

total, in the second only partial. Now, although the presence of God is constant in the soul, when the soul turns away from it, distracted by images or wandering thoughts, it is truly night in her, and she is bereft of all sense of that presence; it is the same in the case of a soul which yields to tepidity. As soon, however, as the soul again turns from the images or distracting thoughts, or again recovers that earnestness of spirit and raises herself to God, she is again enlightened, for the obstacles between her and God have disappeared. In the other case the sense of the presence of God is only partially lost, since the soul does not turn herself to the distractions or images, but they hang about in her imagination and dim the light of God without wholly depriving her of it. Again, like a thick mist, the interior conflict of the senses against the pure love and naked faith causes some dimness and incapacity in the soul, though this is less than in the cases where the soul is extroverted to some external object, or when she yields to tepidity. And just as a mist vanishes little by little, so the obscurity thus caused disappears gradually as the very presence of God expels it, and calms the rebellious senses. Yet in such times of gloom the soul must not imagine that she is contemplating God *and* images, for we have said that we cannot have God otherwise than whole and entire, and she can contemplate Him dimly only when she keeps herself completely turned away from all such commotion, leaving it only in her imagination and lower sensitive powers.

Consequently the soul should always do her utmost to prevent all interior hindrances or, if that be impossible, to drive them away the sooner; for by diligent care she can take good heed not to convert herself to distracting images or thoughts and so to yield place to them. Again, she is often able to rouse herself to fresh fervour when she becomes aware of interior coldness of spirit, and thus she will be doing something on her own part to avoid losing this divine presence so often and to recover it more quickly once it is lost.

Chapter the Twenty-eighth

How in her external works, and all other multiplicity, the Soul shall continue in the aforesaid union with God.

Hitherto we have shown the soul how she is to find her Beloved in renouncing all things and, having found Him, how she shall overcome all interior and exterior hindrances to her union with Him; henceforth we must teach her how she is to behave herself amidst the multiplicity of exterior business, which often she cannot avoid, and must carry out by reason of her vocation and of necessity, so as not to lose her union with God. Now it is far easier to find and enjoy God in solitude than in multiplicity; many there be who have God present in time of prayer, but few who retain that presence amidst exterior business; yet the soul must come to this if the union between her and God is to remain stable and perfect. Indeed the soul which contents herself with that union possessed in times of prayer and recollection, without attempting to retain it in times of exterior work, will necessarily lose even the former union; for she would not be truly dead to herself unless she were determined to restrain her senses from wandering, and to remain as diligently united to

God during external occupations as in time of prayer and abstraction. Again, if she were to turn to creatures upon every occasion which presented itself she would dim and eventually blind that interior eye of the spirit which, with so much labour, she has purified and opened to God. If she would keep the inward vision clear she must learn to behold all exterior things after a spiritual manner and forever close her exterior eyes to unnecessary distractions. Moreover, she can have but one life in her, either of spirit or of nature; the death of one is the resurrection of the other, and it is impossible for both to exist in the soul either simultaneously or by turns. Consequently, if the soul means to go forward in the life of the spirit, she must wholly extinguish nature, and at no time allow it to come to life again. What the soul has obtained of God in her prayer she must hold with all possible care and diligence, not only (as we have said) against all negligences, distracting thoughts, images, interior movements, pain and trials, interior and exterior, but also against all extroversion in necessary employments and business. Yet for us to teach the soul how she is to do this, and for her to understand and put it into practice, is a harder matter than anything which has gone before; for all other acts and sciences require man's diligence only at some certain time and place, and only according to one part of man, but the science of retaining the presence of God in the soul in exterior employments and multiplicity requires the whole man at all times and places without

intermission. And, whereas the difficulties of any other art or science are overcome through a natural desire and inclination which man has to them, this task is a continual forcing of nature against all her inclinations.

With many words we have taught and, with more labour, the soul has learned how she must avert herself from all creatures and keep herself naked from images and vacant from all working of her own, in order to find the secret presence of God. Now she must convert herself to creatures, behold, touch and handle them, and, for all that, remain as oblivious of them and as quiet and recollected as though they did not exist. The soul is so easily moved and interiorly obscured that it is necessary for her to hold herself quite still in order that the senses may not rise and mingle themselves with the spirit; and if it has been so difficult for her to reach this state, how will it be to hear, see, work with the senses and yet remain as quiet and detached as ever?

In the beginning of our treatise we frequently made use of examples from nature, and we shall now compare the soul to the air, which, among all the created things of nature, is most fit at all times to receive the light of the sun. This is because it is the most subtle of all created things; it adheres neither to itself nor to anything else and yields at once to winds or anything which resists it; although it touches and fills all things yet it mingles itself with none, but leaves anything quite easily; nor is it in itself operative, but has a pure receptability

to all things, holding itself in a passive manner to all. Thus should be the interior disposition of the soul which at all times and places, and amidst external occupations, will remain united with God and retaining that divine light without impediment. She must be subtle, pure and clear, for although she was created such by God (being a pure spirit) she has become earthly and dulled owing to her inordinate clinging to earthly things; and even although she has now become pure and clear in herself through the practice of perfect abnegation, yet she needs incomparably more purity to retain the interior divine light amidst multiplicity than to do so when abstracted from all things. She has learned to detach herself from created things, but she has not yet learned to rise above them, and to have the light without as well as within her. Then she must not cling to herself nor to anything without her, so that all may pass by without in the least moving or troubling her any more than if she were dead or insensible. She must become so loosed and free from whatever is external to her that she can touch, see, turn to, and turn from it all without its becoming in any way part of her at the time or afterwards; and this is incomparably more difficult than to be simply turned away from all created things and resigned in God.

Finally the soul must be utterly free from all working of her sensitive powers, and remain in a state of passive receptability to that inflowing divine light, and though she has learned and practised this

in her solitude and rest it is much more difficult to retain this simplicity of mind amidst external business. For here she must work with her natural powers and her senses, and yet so simply that she does not in the least disturb her interior peace or decline by one iota from the interior solitude of her mind. By this we may see what must be the disposition of the soul which would thus maintain her union with God amidst exterior works; she must be wholly detached from herself, and from all created things, not only in will but in fact, and she must have in her, in the supreme perfection, the pure love and naked faith before mentioned so that she be truly dead and annihilated, as regards all lower affection, and lives only according to the spirit in God; such a soul is rather an angel than a man.

Chapter the Twenty-ninth

Some general teaching as to how the Soul may retain the presence of God and remain united to Him in external works.

But although it be hard to remain thus united to God whilst busy with external works the soul must not believe that it is impossible; it is even easy of itself but here, as elsewhere, all the difficulty arises from ourselves. Inexperienced souls will hardly be persuaded of this on account of their own experience in seeking God, for despite all their care and diligence, by which they strive to keep the presence of God, they find that they often lose Him and indeed can scarcely remain united to Him for any considerable time.

Such souls must firmly believe that God is as present unto us in the midst of multiplicity as in abstraction and recollection, and as ready to communicate Himself to us in the one as in the other. Yet He also requires of us that not only in time of prayer and solitude we should remain united to Him, but that we should be so continually without intermission; and for this end only has He created us, and this is the perfection for which we must continually labour

in this life. Neither can the fault be laid upon the external works, for they are all outside of us and cannot hurt us interiorly; nor does the trouble lie in the fact that our attention cannot extend itself to things so different at one and the same time, for (as we shall presently show) union with God does not require an actual attention to God in the soul. For it suffices that the soul should continue in that state of preparation for God which we have already explained, for when she retains this she remains with God; nor can she lose this except by her own fault, for it is nothing else but an interior peace of all her powers proceeding from a perfect resignation to God. Now in order to perform her exterior works faithfully, no matter how manifold or how difficult they be, it is in no wise necessary that the soul leave her inward peace; for trouble and disquiet cannot help anybody to perform his business the better, but rather hinder him, distract his attention, and weary him as much as does the actual labour itself. On the contrary peace of heart makes the soul present to herself, and causes an all but helps, just as exterior light does not hinder interior clearsightedness which hinders nothing at but furthers the due performance of our exterior works.

On the other hand, for those whose spiritual exercise is not in this interior peace, but in constant active operation, it is impossible to retain the presence of God amidst external works, for the soul cannot give her whole attention to two different objects

at one and the same time; and it is because such men know no other form of commune with God than by means of such active working that they deny the possibility of maintaining constant divine union, even when occupied in external works. Therefore, whilst those who make use only of operative spiritual exercises (as also those whose union with God in interior solitude is not yet rightly obtained) will meet with many hindrances, for those who have practised perfect abnegation, and found God thereby, there is only one danger—that of leaving their interior peace. For as long as the soul keeps this she keeps her union with God (who is a most simple essence) which is retained in the same way as it was originally obtained; and when and where God finds the same disposition of mind He shows and manifests Himself without difference or exception of time or place. For at all times and places God is present after one and the selfsame manner, and therefore if the soul remained the same to God He would remain the same to her, and if she did not first separate herself from God He would in no wise separate Himself from her. But she runs off and leaves Him within, or yields place within her to something which comes between God and her, and troubles that inward peace and dims that inward clearness without which God cannot reveal Himself to her.

The soul must know, therefore, that God must not be sought more anxiously nor operatively in external works than in her solitude, for all the

difficulty which we mentioned in the preceding chapter does not arise from the fact that we must *do* more than in time of prayer, but on account of the great care and diligence which is required in order to retain the necessary simplicity and detachment in the soul during times of exterior works. Therefore the soul must endeavour to retain the same disposition interiorly in times of work that she has in times of prayer, unless the work itself requires otherwise if it is to be done as it ought to be (of which we shall speak later) and so she will retain the presence of God. In order to do this she must observe some exterior conditions, and first she must consider whether the work be truly such as she ought to perform, whether by reason of obedience, or her own or her neighbour's necessity or spiritual profit; for if the work be unnecessary or unprofitable then there is some affection or passion mingled with it, out of which she does it. Unless the work be enjoined by one of the reasons we have given she ought to avoid the dangerous occasions thus brought about, and remain in her solitude. And if there chance to be several necessary and profitable works to be done at once she must do the most necessary and profitable without having regard to her own convenience, profit, ease or comfort; neither will it suffice to do what is less profitable and necessary unless true discretion require it. Otherwise again some natural affection or passion is mingled with her intention, whereas she is ever to seek to do what is most for God's honour, and her own and her

neighbour's spiritual profit, out of the pure love she bears to God and without any respect to herself; for she is no more her own but belongs wholly to God. And when we say of exterior works in particular that they ought not to be unnecessary or superabundant applies to whatever a man does either interiorly or exteriorly; whether sitting, standing, going about, speaking, hearing, seeing, all must be measured by this standard, otherwise the soul will lose God therein. It is herein that almost all men are defective, for there is hardly any to be found who are so careful and watchful in all their doings and omissions as never to extrovert themselves without necessity, and always to seek to do what is the most perfect. For usually they are satisfied if what they do be not bad, and if such do not watch themselves more narrowly they will become more and more estranged from God, and lose all that they have gained in solitude. It is merely from want of this exterior fidelity that among people who love God so few—scarcely any indeed—can be found who, amidst external business, can easily retain the presence of God and remain actually united to Him.

Now, granting that the work is necessary and profitable, the soul should not fear or avoid it but must apply herself to it as cheerfully and willingly as to God Himself; for any aversion from or fear of it would be a failure in that annihilation of self, and the very esteeming of that external work as an impediment to her union with God would cause

a real hindrance to that union. Nor must the soul direct her intention with an effort (although other spiritual beginners do so profitably) for thereby she is covertly treating the work as an obstacle to her divine union; but since she knows that it is the will of God that she should be occupied with such work, she should apply herself to it quietly, and, with the same tranquillity as she would in prayer, retain the presence of God within her. She should not frame any form of being to the work, but only interiorly and diligently watch that her intention does not extrovert itself out of God, and be on her guard lest any affection or natural commotion arise owing to her doing the work with too much haste or impetuosity, which last may easily happen.

Moreover, she must not be anxious for the end of the work, although it seem to her as though it will not be such as it ought to be or as she imagines, but must commit that wholly to God, to whom the work belongeth, and on her part only do what she can do for the present. Nor, in order to retain her spiritual presence of mind and detachment, must she run over the work more slightly or hastily than it requires and so perform it imperfectly, for since she believes it to be the will of God she must execute it with all the fidelity God would have of her: *For that man is cursed who performeth the work of God negligently.*[1] This is to be understood as well of exterior as of interior, of little as of great works;

[1] Jer. xlviii, 10

for not the work, but the will of God whence it proceeds must be considered, and that is always of equal worth. Therefore the soul must perform conscientiously whatever she has to do, and neither shun it nor *shuffle* over it quickly [*sic*] for to do so would do her spiritual harm, in that she is really seeking herself therein contrary to God's good pleasure; and this truth holds good even if, owing to her weakness and imperfection, she cannot retain the presence of God as she would wish. For, if she willingly suffer this trial for the love of God although in her work she may not be able to retain Him, yet after the work is finished she will have suffered no injury thereby, but by reason of her faith and love, she will be specially assisted by God. In such a case she shall *leave God for God,* believing that since He knows her weakness and yet requires that that work be performed by her, He will not impute that temporary separation from Him to any fault of hers, so long as she does her best to remain in union with Him. But she must carefully notice whence this damage proceeds, and what it is in these external works which hinders her from God, that so she may profit thereby; for thus have perfect men profited by their failings and, little by little, come to perfect union with God.

Moreover the soul is not to seek God out of the exterior work and seek to convert herself from the work, inwards or upwards, by some effort, for it is impossible to do so effectively. Besides the exterior reflection which is required for the work, such an

attempt at interior conversion only causes multiplicity and destroys the simplicity of the soul, which is thus sometimes turned inwards to God, sometimes outwards to the work; the result can only be that the inward conversion is performed very imperfectly, and the outward work very unfaithfully. The soul must therefore do her work (which is wholly divine) in perfect peace, with requisite mortification and care, omitting any direct introversion to God for the time, but working with such simplicity, purity and resignation that the very doing of the work, and the reflection thereupon, may serve her for a conversion to God, whom she must believe to be as well without as within her.

Chapter the Thirtieth

Wherein is further declared how the soul must behave in exterior works, and how she shall enjoy God in them as well as in her quiet Prayer.

Let us now begin to teach the soul how she shall actually persevere in union with God during her exterior works. At such times, besides the mortification of the natural man and fidelity, of which we have spoken, she must watch herself very narrowly and go to her work as to a school, to learn how to keep the divine union thereby and therein. For though men and books may give some instruction, the soul must learn for herself for the most part and, having once learned, she must perform every work, no matter how small, in and with God. When a man is learning how to walk upon a tight-rope he reflects very carefully upon every step, lest he should miss his footing and fall to the ground; in like manner the soul is now raised above all created things, which is a narrow and small cord for the wild and unbridled senses, and therefore she must closely observe the least of her works, since the least sensuality or mortification, or want of self-control in the exterior man, will cause her to fall to the ground.

Now even if the soul have not yet attained to such union with God in prayer she must not, on this account, cease to observe her works thus faithfully. It often happens that beginners experience more of God in simple external works than they do in prayer and abstraction, because they have not yet gained complete mastery over their senses and powers and cannot hold them captive in naked faith. In this case the more they strive after perfect recollection the more rebellion they feel, and the further off from God they seem to be, whereas when they are busied with some simple exterior work their natural powers are turned upon that work, and the spirit sometimes makes a swift ascent to God, finding the way thus open. Such persons may seek to do such works when necessary, though not otherwise, for (as has been said) it is not lawful to convert ourselves to unnecessary exterior work. In this case the intention is good since such persons desire to advance to God more than by prayer made in solitude. But, if such are to profit hereby, they ought to reflect how they are exteriorly disposed when they thus perceive the nearness of God, and observe how simply the spirit raises itself above the senses, trying to retain that same disposition and to apply themselves in the same manner in time of prayer; so doing they may make much progress through those exterior works.

But nature differs in men, and because one man is by nature more vehement and uncontrolled than another; such an one may not experience any such

enlightening, although he may have practised prayer more and may have known some manifestation of the *divine light* even if he be not as yet come to the true *presence of God*. Such a soul must not attempt to find or retain that divine presence amidst exterior work, for she could do so only by active effort and only very imperfectly; it suffices if she seek only to keep the interior peace of heart and simplicity which she has in time of prayer.

For if the soul remains in interior peace the spirit is much more free from the working of the sensitive powers, and in a more favourable state for discovering the interior working whereby it must raise itself to God; consequently such souls must not try to raise themselves to God but simply avoid and let go all passions, affections, and natural movements, and keep themselves as free and detached interiorly as they possibly can, performing the exterior work faithfully. By these means gradually the spirit will elevate itself to God, as we shall show hereafter. The only exception to the general rule arises when a man is doing some work which is so familiar and simple that he does it mechanically without needing to apply his attention thereto; for then he does not *work* in the strict sense and may keep himself thus elevated by means of a simple inclination. Such an inclination, however, is possible only with such routine work, as in all other cases at least the eyes must be busied with the work and that means that there must be some reflection thereon. But the soul which has come to the con-

templation of the hidden presence of God in herself, and by faithful exterior and interior practice has now a certain access to it, must not content herself with this inferior peace, but must see that she perseveres in the actual fruition of the divine presence, or at least in the aforesaid actual union with God. Out of these two she should never be, for although she cannot in all works retain the fruition of the divine presence, yet in all she must never omit the divine union. She cannot always enjoy the presence of God because she cannot always have or keep it except by an intimate introversion which, for its perfection, needs her whole attention, whereas it often happens that the exterior works require the whole, or a great part, of the attention if they are to be perfectly performed. Yet even then the soul may well continue in the actual union with God, of which we shall speak in the next chapter.

And here I will explain further the difference between the *fruition* of God and the actual union with Him, so that the soul may distinguish between the instruction which we will give for simple tasks and what we shall presently give for more complicated work, which needs particular attention. The soul enjoys God in her exterior work when she is above her exterior object and above herself, wholly raised in God, contemplating and reflecting upon Him in such simplicity and recollection as though she were in solitude. And because she can remain thus attentive to God in slight and ordinary external works, which need no particular application of

the understanding or the senses, I say that in such employments the soul has God truly present and enjoys Him. True it is that for the present she cannot open and dilate herself, as she does in her solitude, because she is hindered through that exterior reflecting upon her work (even though it be very simple) and is not so wholly her own. Nevertheless she truly enjoys God, for she is converted to Him as far as she is capable, and ready to listen to Him and to receive whatever He may be pleased to infuse into her, as she is in time of prayer. This is to be understood of the case where the visitation of God is not forcible in the soul nor of long duration, for in such a case she must leave off the exterior work in order to correspond, and also for the sake of reverence, as we read that S. Francis when going on his way would stand still out of reverence when he perceived God's visitation. But when the exterior work requires particular attention the soul does not reflect upon God in the same manner nor can she observe His visitation ; yet because she does the work with perfect resignation of herself to God, retaining the solitude of her heart and keeping all images out of her mind, she remains actually united to God, having nothing within her which can come between her and Him. Moreover, she stands continually in that divine light which serves her for a certain sign of the actual union of her spirit with God.

And in order to know in what work the soul can retain this fruition of God, or must help herself

with the actual union, she must diligently examine any work to which she applies herself as to whether it be of such nature as to require particular attention or not; for many works may be done with the exterior members whilst needing very little application of the understanding, and in such slight and ordinary works the soul may continue in contemplating and enjoying God as well as in time of prayer. In such works, therefore, it is not sufficient for the soul to content herself with the implicit union with God and the divine light; indeed she would be unable to retain them since she would have departed from the fruition of God without necessity, which cannot be done unless there is some natural affection or passion in question, whereby the soul has departed from the complete annihilation of self.

We may make this clearer by a simple example. We know by experience that the eyes can simply behold some object yet the man's whole attention be concentrated upon another object. We observe this when we read or write anything; we behold letters and paper but we have no thought or reflection upon them, our whole attention being turned to what the letters signify. Again, if a man goes for a walk in the Spring sunshine simply for enjoyment and recreation, he does not fix his attention upon the sun, or his gait, or frame any image thereof; his whole extension and thought is upon the pleasant feeling and recreation, in which he finally rests. Yet, whilst thus enjoying the sunshine he can very

well observe how and whither he goes and must so do. So we find by experience that we can behold an exterior object without being thereby hindered, but even rather furthered in the continual observation of another thing; so can it be that in the aforesaid interior exercise to God the soul may remain steadfastly elevated though her eyes and members are employed, when it is done simply for God, and through the pure intention which she has in this work her spirit is raised above the work to God and rests simply in Him as the sole end of the work. This is the more easily effected here because the attention to God is in the summit of the soul, which is incomparably more separated from the exterior senses than are the powers of the soul. Besides this, the spirit has been so simplified and detached and interiorly raised to God that it is always inclining towards Him, and actually converting itself to Him when it is not held back through the affections, senses or powers of the soul.

Thus it may be that in simple occupations the soul continues in the enjoyment of the divine presence without being hindered by distraction, by image of what she beholds or by her exterior bodily action. She applies her senses and members as insensible instruments; God is the sole drift and scope of her work to whom also all her attention is bent during the work. But whilst a beginner will know and behold God in His work by purity of intention and is, in a sense, really helped to God by the work this other soul has God's presence essentially within

her; she does not further herself by the work but seeks only so to do it that it may not deprive her of God. Yet, as we have said, the faithful performance of *necessary* exterior work must always be preferred before the interior attention of the soul; for the latter must be left when the work, which must be done according to God, would thereby suffer detriment.

And if the understanding and senses should incline themselves too much thither and print in themselves the image of the work, the spirit must simply endure it all as though it did not observe it. Further, when, as happens in such simple work, there arise several things upon which the soul may reflect, let the soul choose but one and by it raise herself to God. For just as in time of prayer she may have but one simple operation, so in time of work there must be but one simple reflection, which serves in place of that simple interior operation. Thus it happens that the soul elevates herself above that exterior work to God, of whom, in the superior portion of herself, she has a permanent and peaceful intuition or sight which satisfies her as that which she experiences in time of prayer; and her spiritual life is furthered as much by this as by her prayer and abstraction. We say purposely that the soul has an insight in God above herself and her work because she may by no means look interiorly towards God, for that would avert her from her work. She may do that, however, when she is hearing anything upon which she need not reflect with observation,

receiving the same in a passive manner, whilst remaining interiorly converted to God.

But should it happen (as it often does with an inexperienced person) that in these exterior works the soul is unable to bear herself so simply that the spirit may elevate itself, let her not try to raise herself operatively, for this will but hinder her the more. Let her be content to retain her interior peace without active operation, for then she will find it easier afterwards to return to her former elevation of spirit.

Chapter the Thirty-first

How the Soul must bear herself in manifold exterior works which require particular attention.

But sometimes work is of such a nature that it requires particular attention, as in the case of reading, writing or counting; or two tasks, each easy in itself, must be performed together, and the effort to do both causes multiplicity in the soul. In such cases it is not possible to persevere in the contemplation of the divine presence, hence the soul must learn yet another art, by which she may then help herself so that she may not often fall from the unity of spirit into the multiplicity of the senses, and be distracted from the interior union with God to the exterior object of her work.

First of all she must not strive to retain and enjoy the *presence of God* in her but must willingly let it go; for otherwise she would but lose time and effect nothing. She must only do her best to persevere in the use of the divine light, and thereby in the actual *union* with God; and this is not difficult, since it needs no particular attention, but only that the soul, on her part, remains in the abnegation of all creatures and the perfect resignation of herself

to God. So by the help of the divine light she beholds the exterior things and performs the work still remaining actually united to God.

Now, in order to teach the soul how she shall continue in this abnegation and resignation, we must first observe that the greatest hindrance arises from the commotion and inclination of the lower powers. For although she is now somewhat practised in naked faith, so that she can behold the exterior object in unity of mind without image or impression, she is yet troubled in the inferior part, not through evil desires, inordinate affections and the repugnance of nature to good (for all these are now much mortified and subdued), but by reason of those good motions and affections which she must here use. For they serve her to perform that external work duly and faithfully as it requires yet, by reason of their *operativeness*, they are often contrary to that interior peace and inclination to God, which should be permanent in the soul in order to maintain the divine union. Neither can nor may the soul annihilate and mortify these motions and inclinations, because they are given her by God as instruments to help her the better to perform good and eschew evil; therefore she must so measure and order them in her exterior working that she does not trouble that interior rest with God. To an inexperienced soul this is very difficult, therefore she must be very vigilant as well in the beginning as in the course of such like works, lest these motions and affections outweigh reason; but she must hold them always in subjec-

tion, using interiorly such help as is given her by God to that end, and not suffer corrupt nature to damage her therein.

And this is the proper fruit of all those exercises which have gone before, that she subdue the inferior man in that just and due ordinance to God and reason wherein she was first created by God. The joy, sorrow, fear, hate and other commotions which ordinarily the soul feels arising in her in the beginning of her exterior work (according to the nature of the work) she must speedily seek to prevent and control, using them no more than is requisite for the due performance of the work, regulating their impulses and active working so that her inward peace suffer no detriment. Such movements as proceed from the bad inclination of nature, and strive against reason, she must by all possible means endeavour to extinguish in her; therefore all vain fear, levity, mirth, curiosity, hastiness and over-eagerness which do commonly arise in the soul on the acceptance of any external work (especially if the work be difficult or important) she must strongly repress, by no means yielding to them but remaining immovable in her interior peace and beginning and finishing according to the precept of reason and right discretion in God.

And when the soul now peaceably and simply applies herself to the work she finds no impediment from below, and therefore she has her free ascent to God as though the work were of itself simple. But, because it is the will of God that she convert herself to the external work in order to perform it

properly, she may not elevate herself to the contemplation of the divine essence but must attend to the exterior object; yet because she does it purely for God she will not therefore be hindered from the actual union with God. Indeed, even though she remains in her usual abnegation and resignation, whilst letting go the contemplation of the presence of God, the divine light cannot perfectly enlighten her since, on account of the external work, she cannot continue in the light by means of the interior loving inclination of which we have spoken. Therefore by great spiritual energy and strength of faith she casts that simple power, by which in time of prayer she raises herself to God or sinks herself in Him, swiftly in God, above all multiplicity and operation of her senses, and lets it there rest as lost in God. This she can do since, when she began her work, she had that same power recollected from all exterior objects and, by means of her former spiritual exercises, she now has control of it; the power also flies to God, as a spark flies upwards, and so she rests in her origin above all multiplicity.

Thus, whilst turning to her outward employment, the soul is not separated from God but remains undisturbed in her interior peace, possessing and using that inward light by the help of which she remains in her nakedness and solitude of spirit. But this she has only in the summit of her spirit where this simple power lies recollected in God; yet she is no whit troubled, and the work is done without any attachment or self gratification, since her sole desire is to

remain united to God. Moreover, since the work is so done the exterior sight and reflection of the soul upon the work help her to retain the light in the summit of the spirit and she continues peacefully in that noble light; for, as we have said, she cannot obtain the light by any conversion, contemplation or operation on her own part but, after right preparation, it manifests itself in her. Applying herself to the work purely for God she does not convert herself operatively to the interior light, or reflect upon it of set purpose, although she has it actually present and sees the external work in and with it, working as God requires of her. Just so my eye sees an object and enjoys it by means of the light, though it is not converted directly to the light but in and with the light to the object.

Behold here is briefly declared the secret way whereby the soul remains united to God without suffering herself to be troubled either by the extroversion of the powers or the many images before her; but sees, works and hears with as much rest and peace as though wholly withdrawn from all exterior things and vacant. Moreover, that external work and all creatures present themselves to the soul from without, after a divine manner; not (as they are in themselves) out of God but as flowing from God and continually depending upon Him. So, even by that exterior sight, the soul is more established in God, to the actual contemplation of whom she can raise herself without difficulty every moment; for she stands without intermediary before God and, as often as her

work permits, swiftly, amidst multiplicity, she raises herself to the contemplation of the divine presence in her, and immediately the will also turns thither, dilating itself in the fruition of God. Furthermore, the soul experiences exceeding great comfort from the knowledge of her own *nothing*, so that even amidst manifold and difficult occupations she is not disturbed in herself, or separated from God, but in both understanding and will enjoys perfect rest and peace.

But this elevation of the soul is beyond measure simple, so simple that it ought not to be called an elevation; hence we have said that the soul casts her power of loving into the divine light. For this is a thing so simple, yet so spiritual, that hitherto we have not spoken of it. Formerly the soul had always to use some cooperation, whereby she placed herself in the presence of God; nor could she otherwise retain the divine light. But here there is no such thing, nor must there be if right attention is to be given to the work; all that the soul does is to remain in interior purity and resignation in God and to work faithfully and simply for God. Then, finding no obstacle, the divine light irradiates her, as though she were in solitude and abstraction, and she retains it by her simple conversion to the work.

Hence it is apparent that the interior disposition of the soul in this exercise is far different from what it is when, in time of prayer or simple work, she is actually contemplating and enjoying God. For here she is indeed elevated above her senses and powers

in God, yet she is not converted to Him with attention and actual fruition; but only according to her affection she remains continually turned away from herself and from all which is not God, her attention being given to the work in hand yet as a thing divine and united with God. Consequently this conversion is swifter than that which is done by the spirit in time of quiet prayer or simple works, and also more forcible, for it is not hindered by the multiplicity. The soul is attached to no object but keeps herself raised above all objects, so that, at any moment, she can leave off what she is performing without difficulty, just as though she had never been converted thereto. Therefore the spirit remains always in a convenient *receptivity*[1] which the heavenly light replenishes.

These dispositions—both that in time of prayer and this last in time of *complicated*[2] work—require a continual and perfect annihilation of the whole man; for the powers and senses perform the work as though all that is exterior did not exist, and the soul stands in perfect oblivion of herself. Only in time of prayer, besides the annihilation, there is a *losing* of herself in God, whereas that is not present when she is working, and she easily returns and observes herself and other creatures. Again in the latter case, since she has to work contrary to her inclination, and her senses observe only an exterior object wholly different from God, she has to see God in the object, or at least behold it as something wholly spiritual

[1] The expression in the original is *a convenient capableness*.
[2] *multiplicious*.

and divine, which undoubtedly requires a strong, firm faith and confidence in God. Therefore no man can remain elevated to God amidst external works who is not exercised and has not made some good progress in abnegation, resignation, pure love and naked Faith, as we have formerly taught. For a man must first learn to forget all creatures when he is separated from them before he endeavours to forget them when they are present; to separate his spirit from his senses in solitude before he go about to do so in the multiplicity of external works; and by annihilation of himself to find God in himself before he try to find and retain Him by annihilation of exterior creatures. Indeed, he in whom this interior disposition has not gone before is not only unfit to exercise himself after this secret manner but also cannot understand the little we have said thereon; whereas to one who is practised in the interior exercise this other, though very hard to perform perfectly at first, is very clearly understood.

Chapter the Thirty-second

Of the hindrances encountered by the Spirit in this elevation and of the remedies against them.

The soul has now begun to find in herself this secret ascension of the spirit, as well in complex works as in those which are simple, and has seen how a man may, in unity of spirit, elevate himself above all multiplicity to the fruition of the secret presence of God, or at least to the actual union with Him. Nevertheless, she must know that, in the beginning, she will very easily fall from thence, lose all unity and be in multiplicity against her will.

For the least impression, commotion, trouble or operation to which she yields or converts herself will cause her to lose her *nothing*, be extroverted, and will break the intimate union which she had with God, and at first this will often happen as well in time of work as in time of prayer. But most of all the soul extroverts herself in the exterior employments which require actual attention of the powers and senses, and in these soonest loses her unity of spirit since her powers must here work operatively, and

also because her elevation of spirit consists only in in an interior aversion from all creatures and not in the actual enjoyment of God's secret presence, as is the case with simple works. Necessarily also it is sooner lost in the case of inexperienced men, although, of itself, it can stand notwithstanding all employments. Hence the faithful soul who meets with these manifold difficulties in the beginning must not wonder much or be grieved, but must endure them all patiently, doing her utmost to overcome them by interior constancy of spirit and more steadfastness in God.

As for the impediments, they are sufficiently evident from what has already been said. First of all in simple works the soul enjoys God as in time of recollection and quiet; consequently the hindrances which are in the one have their place in the other, and whatever images, commotion and trouble the soul feels in herself (owing to the rebellion of her senses or distracting thoughts) she must not overcome otherwise than by persevering in her simple conversion to God. This is not so easily done as in time of prayer yet the soul may not do anything else, nor may she therefore turn herself from the work to God as she does in her quiet prayer in solitude, for thereby she would cause a fresh impediment. But, with all possible diligence, she must continue in the simple exterior reflection upon the work and peacefully resume it again as often as she perceives that she has departed from it. There is no other remedy for her, and in time she will be established in God

above all multiplicity, and also without hindrance will remain in the external work enjoying God.

And in case the soul find that the work be not absolutely necessary (although begun out of a good intention) or she perceive in herself a feeling of tediousness and a desire to be rid of the work, she must yet do nothing to the contrary unless she can discreetly leave off the work. Otherwise she must go on as though it were altogether necessary and she had nothing therein but a pure intention; for now in very truth it is necessary. So remaining converted to God she will wholly exclude that rising sinister intention, and also perfectly expel that tediousness, better than if she were to oppose them interiorly. Even though she had willingly begun an unnecessary work, or a necessary work with a bad intention, and now in time of work would recall herself, she must not, for all that, do anything but stand in her accustomed conversion to God. And this she must do the sooner the better and with as tranquil a mind as though she had done nothing but well from the beginning; patiently bearing the obscurity and separation from God which she finds in herself. Thus, after the surest and speediest manner, she will atone for her former fault, and little by little will recover her interior clearness. And if the soul would know whether she is behaving herself aright let her reflect upon the signs which we have already given, whereby she may know whether she performs her interior conversion to God as she ought; for what takes place there must take place here. In order

to enjoy God in her simple works the soul must be as loose and detached from the exterior object, and from her own image, as though they were actually annihilated; more, she must stand elevated above time and place in the changeless eternity, and there reflect upon that secret divine *essence* and rest peaceably therein with all her powers and attention.

With some few exceptions all these instructions have their place also in the simple elevation of the spirit by which the soul must persevere in the divine *union* in time of complicated work. For although there she does not actually enjoy God she must be in the same dispositions for such, excepting only that intimate operation to God from which she remains vacant. She is not here elevated in herself above time and place although she is wholly averted from them; so that all which hinders her in the former kind of work hinders her here also, except that, as that intimate operation by which she converts herself to God has no place here, she does not suffer harm from the weakness of the spirit. Once the soul is perfectly detached and vacant the only remaining hindrance arises from her inexperience, inasmuch as her senses are easily drawn to the exterior object, and work with their natural gross activity, so that the soul is disturbed and loses the influx of the Divine light. Therefore, in this exercise, more than in any other, it is the soul's own fault if trouble arises; for if she beholds the external creatures without any relation to God, and as wholly separated from Him,

they will be simply hindrances, whereas through her faith she should convert herself to them as proceeding from God and being united to Him; and so by them she is helped to God and not withdrawn from Him. If creatures hinder her it is because she does not behold them with the light and faith she has now obtained, and in the truth in which she is now established, for if she did no employments or multiplicity of creatures could keep her from God, but would rather further her on her way to Him. And this knowledge should very much comfort the soul and give her great light in all her exterior works, to accept and perform them in perfect interior peace and tranquillity of heart as being such as cannot hinder her union with God.

But when the soul does perceive that she has fallen back upon creatures, and lost all sense of the divine light and of God, let her not be disquieted, but perform her work simply and quietly, willingly bearing for God the privation of the divine union. And as we said concerning times of quietness and abstraction, so we say here that the soul must remain at peace, simply enduring all recurring impediments without actively fighting those arising images and natural movements. But whereas in the former case there was a simple aversion, by which the soul let go and passed by all these impediments as soon as she noticed them and at once returned simply to God; here the ground of her exercise is *faith*, whereby she believes that all created things have such union with God that they cannot come between Him and

her. If she acts otherwise she will never attain to that elevation of mind amidst multiplicity which is necessary in exterior works. No multiplicity could hinder her so much as the least doubt against this truth, hence whenever the senses object the soul must ground herself upon that pure faith, firmly believing that although at that time, and for want of the divine light, she is unable to behold the union of exterior things with God that this is none the less true, and that she will easily know this truth again if she will simply persevere in peace, whereby the obscurity will be driven away and the divine light arise again in her.

But let us give certain signs whereby the soul may know whether she has obtained this divine union perfectly above all exterior multiplicity; for although it be as clear to a well-practised soul as it is to a man who sees well to know whether the sun be risen or no, yet to a beginner it is uncertain, and many deceive themselves therein. For this union is indivisible and must be in us either perfectly or not at all, which is the case with very few although perhaps they persuade themselves that they have it. Therefore the soul shall observe whether amidst business, although she be exteriorly occupied with her senses, she be yet interiorly as detached and vacant and as little hindered from God by any creature as though she were in solitude and stillness. This she may easily learn by comparing her interior disposition during external works with that which she has experienced in time of interior prayer, and seeing

whether they agree. But the soul which has sometimes truly experienced this elevation of spirit in exterior works will also perceive in herself sensible and palpable signs whenever she falls down from the unity of her spirit to the multiplicity of her senses and powers, if only she constantly observe her own experience; and we leave her to do this rather than set it down in particular, lest the inexperienced, who know little of the interior disposition of the deiformed soul, hold it incredible.

Another sign is that when the soul leaves off those exterior employments she can presently, without difficulty, turn and enjoy the divine presence within her, and that without altering her disposition otherwise than to assume the intimate operation by which she converts herself to God. For the soul can do this who in her exterior working remains in union with God; nay even amid the work she is always able for an instant to elevate herself to the actual contemplation of God, and that as easily as she can open her hand when it is shut. Therefore when a soul perceives that when she turns from her exterior work to God she must avert herself from something, or resume something else, it is a sign that she has not the divine union in its perfection; for when she has it, even in the midst of exterior works, she is so separated from creatures and absorbed in God that if she were to die at that very instant she could not separate herself more from them than she does already. Other signs there are, such as whether it costs any effort to retain this solitude or whether

any tediousness or trouble be mingled therewith; for all this is against that perfect union which is purely in the spirit, above the powers and affections, and maintained without labour and difficulty. For it expels all sorrow and trouble, both of body and soul, and places man in the perfect oblivion of himself.

Upon these signs the soul must reflect, and she must not think that because when working she finds herself in an interior peace, without being disturbed and distracted, she has the divine union. For many have suchlike peace but few the actual union with God and the constant use of the divine light, for which is required not only a good ordering of affections and passions but also a perfect detachment from all that is created and a perfect resignation of one's self to God.

Thus much concerning the impediments which occur in these two exercises of exterior works, as also the remedies against them. We have expressed them but after a crude manner, but the devout soul will experience what is said much more clearly than we can express it in words; and she will daily perceive more and more unity and stability of spirit within her in time of work, and will at length come so far that she will not be able to perform any exterior work but in that unity of spirit.

She will as easily transfer herself from the *fruition* into the *union* with God, and again from the *union* elevate herself into the *fruition* (according as her

exterior work requires) as she can open her eyes and turn them upwards or downwards. For as the eyes act of themselves, without any observation of man, so the spirit (thus established above the natural powers and senses in this divine unity) can as swiftly, in the twinkling of an eye, open itself to the fruition of God and again, when it is needful, gather itself together and cast itself into the divine light, and by that rest in God without intermediary.

This is most necessary, for the understanding has no place here, and if the soul had to think out and reflect upon this interior change every time it would be only a new hindrance. But because, in the beginning, the soul has not this agility of spirit, she can remain elevated above her work in God only a short time, and then falls back into the operation of her powers and senses. Hence the soul which has come so far must endeavour, by diligent and faithful practice, so to obtain this elevation of spirit in her that it may be so familiar to her that (as a certain spiritual teacher has said) she retains God as constantly in her memory at all times and in all places as though it were natural to her to have God always present. She will do this by carefully observing her recollection and solitude and, in it, by means of her introversion, more perfectly sinking and losing herself in God. Thereby she will be more and more separated from creatures and the senses, and more firmly established in God, and so made fit to remain elevated in God above all multiplicity. For this last exercise in external works is properly a fruit and effect of the

former exercise in solitude and quiet; so the soul must stand upon her own interior experience, which must be the foundation whereon she must build all that has been said in this last instruction.

Chapter the Thirty-third

By an exterior example it is here declared how, through the last exercise, the spirit stands before God in exterior business and how it beholds creatures out of it in solitude.

Since we have hitherto made use of external examples when showing the soul her way to God and directing her in her interior exercises, so now we express like wise this simple elevation of spirit, whereby in exterior business, while working outwardly with reflection by means of her powers and senses, the soul remains in the divine union. And as in the beginning we brought before her the comparison of a ship sailing in the depth of the sea so now we return to it. In her quiet prayer and solitude the soul is like a ship which sails towards the haven with all sails set; for in that quietness the spirit is stretched forth and dilated, like to a sail stretched upon a mast, in order to receive the wind whereby she may sail towards the haven. For through the dilated spirit the soul receives the divine influx like a prosperous wind by which she makes a swift progress through all creatures and herself and is gradually established in God. But a soul which stands above all creatures, in unity of

spirit whilst in exterior multiplicity, is like a ship which cannot sail forward because it is hindered by a tempest, and so lies still at anchor. All her sails are lowered and drawn in, yet she lies still in the sea and is not carried away by the violence of the winds because of her heavy anchor. In like manner the soul finds herself in the multiplicity of creatures and her heart within as a troubled sea by reason of her senses, powers, affections and passions which, like violent winds and storms, attack the tranquillity of the mind and the peaceful enjoyment of God. The spirit cannot raise itself to God and, so receiving the divine influx, sail forward and be wholly absorbed in Him; so, as it were, she draws up her spirit, which was spread forth and wholly extended in God, and casts it into the depth of the divine unity above all multiplicity of exterior things; and so she lies fast at anchor in detachment and vacancy against all arising thoughts and commotions. But although the ship which lies at anchor reaps that benefit that she does not go backwards, yet certainly she loses time in not pursuing her course; yet it is otherwise with the soul, for she loses no time but, being thus elevated in solitude and unity of spirit, she gains continually more control of her senses and powers which are more subjected to the spirit, and she is more strengthened in the knowledge and love of God by keeping herself thus recollected in divine union.

Now in order to explain how the spirit thus elevated beholds all exterior things out of it in unity, we will return to the example of our exterior sight and the

light of the sun. We can behold the visible objects either as they are in themselves without taking any notice of the sunlight wherein they are; or we can behold them as they are exteriorly shined upon by the light and united with it. The first requires more fixing of our intention and power of vision on the exterior things, but in the second no force is required and we can behold many things together, as a whole orchard of trees upon which the sun is shining, or a chamber full of people. This we cannot do when we behold anything fixedly in itself, for the visible power is then wholly converted thereto.

When the soul, with that divine light, sees the exterior things in simplicity of spirit, she is like to one who sees things after the second manner, i.e., as shined upon by the light and united with it; and therefore she converts herself thereunto very loosely and vacantly, remaining still interiorly detached. So she is able to see, hear and do many things together and meantime remain still in simplicity and unity of mind; for though the objects be manifold, the soul takes them all as one in that simple divine light. But this light is not upon the exterior objects, but only in her, and by it she converts herself to the things outside of her, which therefore seem to be shined upon by the light. So to one who sees through a pair of green spectacles all things show themselves green, but only because that through which he looks is green.

Again the soul which is enjoying God in quiet and solitude is like to one who has his sight turned to the

globe of the sun shining in the firmament (supposing that it were possible). Such an one would behold and enjoy the light in its origin and, in like manner, the soul which enjoys the divine presence is wholly introverted to that uncreated light which is the origin of all other light, and contemplates it as far as is possible in this life. And when the man who beheld the sun should withdraw his eyes, and behold the earth below, he would perceive how the sun's beams spread over the world, illuminating all things here below, and he would reckon himself still in the presence of the sun so long as he were shined upon by the beams, although he did not turn to the sun itself. So when this enlightened soul, having come out of her solitude from the contemplation of the divine presence, must extrovert herself and apply herself to necessary business she sees how all creatures depend upon the uncreated sun, and proceed from the divine essence as from their origin. By this she is confirmed in the knowledge of God, and holds herself to be in His presence (although not actually contemplating Him) because she finds herself to be in that heavenly light which, she knows full well, proceeds from Him; and she knows that she stands without intermediary before God, to the contemplation of whom she can convert herself when she pleases.

By this, and the former comparisons and instructions, the devout soul may observe how she is to apply and behave herself interiorly in order truly to find God, and having found Him to retain Him certainly without ever separating herself from union

with Him. This knowledge will not a little help her if she have already the preparation expressed in the four *points*, which is the foundation upon which the whole doctrine is built; and she may easily obtain the fruition of God, as far as may be in this life, if only she faithfully and constantly exercises herself therein. But whosoever has not in him the aforesaid preparation cannot profit by what we have said, and even if he imagine that he comprehends it with his understanding, in truth he does not. He is like to one who, by his understanding, would comprehend the nature of the air or the light, having never enjoyed or seen one or the other. For God must be known by experience and enjoying not by thinking and imagining, and those only are fit for this enjoyment who have in them the aforesaid preparation, and are come thereby to a spiritual *death* and nothing. Others we refer to the practice of the aforesaid points before they take upon them to understand and judge of this doctrine.

And such an one as, having come to this *death* and *nothing*, has begun to profit by this doctrine and to receive that divine light, must not give over or cease until, having overcome all exterior and interior hindrances, combats, vexations, desolations, and multiplicity he is come to the constant and peaceful enjoying of union with God. Neither must he persuade himself that he has obtained God before that; for what he has he may easily lose, as has happened to many. But it will help him much if he firmly believe that the one and only obstacle between God and him is *himself*, and that he will never find

and keep rightly the *kingdom of God in him* until such time as he be wholly dead and annihilated so far as the exterior man is concerned. This death is violent and laborious, and therefore *the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent get it by force.*

But when by faithful practice he is come to this death, without hindrance at all times and places and in all works he will very easily continue in union with God and possess and enjoy quietly this noble prayer.

That we all, being thus mortified and dead to ourselves, may truly find and retain God in us, may He grant us who emptied Himself and died for us; that we, being truly annihiliated and dead in ourselves, may live only in Him and, so enjoying this divine essence, reign forever with Him, Jesus Christ the only begotten of the true God.—AMEN.

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